

**THE TESTING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN IRAQ AND INDIA**

**Thesis submitted for the award of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**

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## **CERTIFICATE**

**CERTIFIED** that the work incorporated in the thesis **THE TESTING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN IRAQ AND INDIA** submitted by **SONDOS TALIB HASSAN** was carried out under my supervision. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in this thesis.

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled **THE TESTING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN IRAQ AND INDIA** carried out under the supervision of **Professor Shridhar B. Gokhale** is original and has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

**August, 2013**

**Sondos Talib Hassan**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is probably the first full-scale study of literature testing at the undergraduate level in Iraq and India, which respectively represent EFL and ESL situations. A lot of research work has been done on language testing, but almost no research work has been conducted on literature testing. The study is based on an analysis of the questions asked on literature in the end-of-the-course formal examinations in the two countries. It attempts to discover whether the questions successfully test students' literary competence. It also analyses the problems in marking students' answers. The reactions of the students and practising teachers to literature teaching and testing have been elicited and a few suggestions about innovative and more efficient types of questions have been made so that the quality of literature teaching and testing is enhanced.

Chapter I discusses various theoretical issues related to the teaching and testing of language and literature. It traces the relationship between language teaching and literature teaching and also between teaching and testing. It deals with the terms 'evaluation' and 'testing' and with different types of tests. It specifies various approaches to testing and points out problems in language and literature testing.

Chapter II specifies the aims of the present study and the analytical and descriptive procedures followed in the study. The chapter begins by offering a justification for the present study. The data analysed consist of literature questions at the undergraduate level collected from five universities each in Iraq and India. The approach followed in this study is essentially eclectic and integrative. The main criteria used in the analysis are the types of questions, their structure, key words and skills and abilities being tested.

Chapter III deals with the testing of English literature in Iraq. The analysis of literature questions set in each of the five universities is followed by generalizations regarding literature testing in Iraqi universities. It is noticed that Iraqi universities use very few objective questions for testing literature and most universities have a large number of essay type questions. Most of the test items are worded as imperative sentences. All the questions are based on memory at least to some extent, but some of the questions also involve independent thinking on the part of students. All the universities have questions testing the students' ability for comprehension and interpretation.

Chapter IV concerns the testing of English literature in India. The analysis of literature questions in the five universities is followed by generalizations about the Indian universities. It is observed that some universities use a few objective questions in literature testing. There are more short answer questions than essay type questions and a majority of questions are worded as imperative sentences. All the questions are based on memory at least to some extent and each university has questions involving a close study of literary texts.

Chapter V presents a comparison of English literature questions set in Iraqi and Indian universities. In general, an Iraqi question paper has fewer questions and fewer options than its Indian counterpart. In India, there is a tradition of writing very long answers to literature questions, whereas in Iraq, the answers are much shorter. It is observed that a majority of questions in Iraqi universities are essay type questions, whereas a majority of questions in Indian universities are short answer questions. In both the countries, sometimes the distinctions among objective, short answer and essay type questions are not clearly and overtly made. A majority of questions in both the countries are worded as

imperative sentences. The most frequent question word used in these universities is ‘what’. All the questions set in the two countries are at least partially memory-dependent, but some questions also test students’ abilities for comprehension and interpretation, independent thinking and personal responses. In both the countries, some of the questions asked are too general and lack in focus and occasionally contain errors of lexis, syntax, spelling and punctuation.

Chapter VI presents the conclusions of the study and makes recommendations for more effective literature testing in the two countries.



# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 English as a World Language**

English is undoubtedly a universal language. It is used extensively in almost all the parts of the world. The emergence of English as a world language has been an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of the world. No other language has so far been a world language in the sense in which English has been the world language. The number of users of English has displayed a phenomenal growth all over the world. It is the world's fourth largest native language after two varieties of Chinese and Spanish. According to Crystal (1995), the first important step in the progress of English as a world language took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During this century, the number of native speakers of English in the British Isles increased considerably. The spread of English is closely connected with British colonialism. This took English to different parts of the world and it started growing in different parts of the world like Canada, the West Indies, America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and many parts of south Asia. English is now a dominant or official language in about 70 countries of the world.

Kachru (1985) visualizes the spread of English as three concentric circles representing different ways in which English is acquired and used. The inner circle represents countries where English is used as a primary native language like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The outer or extending circle represents countries where English has established itself as a major second language like India, Singapore, Malaysia

and many parts of Africa. The expanding circle consists of countries where English is taught as a foreign language and where the importance of English is recognized as in China, Russia, Japan and the Arab countries. It is noticeable that in countries like Russia, China and Germany, where English was opposed earlier, there is greater acceptance of English. Kachru (1985) classifies varieties of English with regard to their positions in relation to norms of language usage. According to him, ENL (English as a Native Language) varieties are 'norm-providing' varieties. The ESL (English as a Second Language) varieties are 'norm-developing' varieties and the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) varieties are 'norm-dependent' varieties. Kachru (1983a) remarks, 'A significant segment of the world's population uses it as their other tongue (as a second or foreign language)...It is this side of English which has actually elevated it to the status of an international (or universal) language' (p.2).

English has become a lingua franca for the whole world and it is a dominant language in the fields of science and technology, commerce and business, computers and the internet, entertainment, diplomacy and even socializing. In many countries of the world, the contexts in which English is being used are expanding all the time. For example, in India it is used as the language of law, science and technology, trade and commerce, higher academic pursuits and research, publication and the media etc. It is interesting that even after sixty years of independence, English continues to be the associate official language of India. A lot of social prestige is attached to English in many parts of the world.

One of the most striking features of English is its multitudinous varieties. Like every language, English has a large number of dialects in countries where it is used as the first language. But unlike most other languages, English has a number of what may be termed

as national varieties or national standards. For example, Standard American English, Standard Australian English, Standard Canadian English and possibly even Standard African English and Standard Indian English. In other words, English is characterized by a multiplicity of standards and there is nothing like Standard English, but there are Standard Englishes in the world. Standard varieties in ENL contexts are considered to be more valid and prestigious. But there is a lot of disagreement among linguists about the status of ESL varieties like African English and Indian English. Sinclair (1985) asserts that English is 'no longer the exclusive province of the native speaker' (p.248) and Kachru (1983b) remarks, 'In the international context, it is more realistic to consider a spectrum of Englishes which vary widely, ranging from standard native varieties to standard non-native varieties' (p.36). Recently some linguists like D'Souza (1997) have argued that it is a myth that Indian English is a non-native variety and that institutionalized varieties like Indian English should be considered native varieties of English. This indicates that the concepts of native and non-native speakers are being questioned and revised.

The large number of varieties of English is an indication of the richness of the English language. A new concept which has been emerging is that of World English or International English. It has been thought that International English will be an amalgam of features of different dominant varieties of English and it will be tolerant of differences in lexis, grammar, spelling etc. Of course, the issue of intelligibility is of crucial importance for the concept of International English. Crystal (1995) believes that the future of English depends on a tension between the principles of intelligibility and individuality.

In many countries of the world, English has been seen as a threat to other languages and in some countries, English itself is being threatened. It is thought that many other languages are being reduced in their importance and scope because of the spread of English. In India, English is seen as a threat to native languages like Marathi, Hindi, Telugu and Bengali, because more and more speakers of these languages have started using English even at home and in the census they claim that English is their first language. In a city like Pune, which is a centre of Marathi culture, it is feared that after 50 years, there will be no Marathi medium schools and that Marathi will be an extinct language by the end of the century. This situation is representative of what is happening in many parts of the world. As a reaction against this, there are attempts to curb the growth of English. In many countries of the world, English is being rejected as an official language because of its associations with colonial history. For example, in Kenya, English was replaced by Swahili as the official language in 1974. In Malaysia, earlier English and Malay were two joint official languages, but since 1967 only Malay has been the official language. Even in India, there are constant efforts to reduce the importance of English, but all such efforts have resulted into strengthening of the English language and sometimes India is recognized as an English-speaking country. It seems that English will continue to be a dominant world language in the foreseeable future.

## **1.2 The Relationship between Language Teaching and Literature Teaching**

The teaching of English language and literature has a long history in different parts of the world. Obviously, English was being taught in ENL contexts for a long period much before it started being taught in ESL or EFL contexts. In many situations, the teaching of

English has been synonymous with the teaching of English literature. Relatively recently, the importance of the teaching of English language has been recognized particularly for foreigners in ENL contexts and in most ESL and EFL contexts. It is now generally accepted that anyone who wants to study English literature must have a satisfactory command over the English language. In this sense, mastery of the English language is a prerequisite for the study of literature. Studying literature without studying the English language is like putting the cart before the horse.

There is an inalienable relationship between language and literature. Language is the medium or substance of literature and literature in a traditional sense can be written only in language. Without language, there is no literature. Therefore, the study of language is closely related to the study of literature. There is a dynamic relationship between the study of language and the study of literature. The study of language heightens the appreciation of literature and the study of literature, in turn, sharpens one's linguistic abilities.

It is a well-known fact that literature consists of a specialized and highly creative use of language. The extraordinary content of literature can be expressed only through an extraordinary use of language. Poetic language is often characterized by a deviant use of language. All deviations can be understood only with reference to the norm.

Linguistics essentially analyses ordinary or common or non-literary language. This is the language used by common people in their day-to-day lives. The different sub-systems of language like phonology, syntax and semantics study different aspects of ordinary language. One needs to have a sound grounding in ordinary language in order to

appreciate deviations of language in literature. Literary use of language is marked by creativity and originality.

Language teaching concerns what students should know about the structure and features of written and spoken language and the ways in which the use of English varies according to the situation and social or cultural context. The study of language takes place in an English classroom with reference to the study of texts on different topics which are the heart of English curriculum.

Ordinary language is the basic mode of communication while literature is an advanced sophisticated mode. Language teaching and literature teaching are closely related. Both are complementary processes. One needs sensitivity to language for literary appreciation and literary works are repositories of authentic language use. A literary text is real language in context. Students can respond to it directly. It offers situations in which discussion of content leads on naturally to an examination of language. A literary text provides examples of language resources and the students are put in an active interactional role in making sense of this language.

It is not always possible to make a clear distinction between literary and non-literary uses of language. In literary language certain features are foregrounded against the background of ordinary language. It may be said that literature uses ordinary language in an extraordinary way. Even non-literary texts like newspaper editorials, travelogues, biographies and advertisement may have certain features like figures of speech, rhetorical effects and deviations. However, it is clear that literature provides useful material in the teaching of the English language. Literature appeals strongly to readers because it ensures

their personal involvement due to its universality. Imaginative engagement with literature involves being away from the mechanical aspects of the language system. When students study a novel, play or poem, they start inhabiting the text. They are drawn into the text and they are eager to know what happens as events unfold. Sometimes they empathise with certain characters and share their emotional responses.

In this way, literature provides effective teaching material because it affects students directly or indirectly. It enables students to relate literature to their own experiences of life and come out with individualistic responses to literature. According to Wales (1989), ‘certainly literature, especially poetry, commonly FOREGROUNDS language and meaning consciously or creatively in a way that overrides a simple informative function, as the FORMALISTS and PRAGUE SCHOOL linguists have stressed....But part of literature’s aesthetic value also comes from its AFFECTIVE appeal to the emotions of the reader.’ (pp. 279-80).

### **1.3 Why Teach Literature?**

In the last few decades the motivation for teaching literature in different contexts, particularly ESL and EFL contexts, has been questioned. Since language is the foundation of literature, the rationale for teaching English language is never questioned in a similar way. English language has to be taught in all contexts. It is believed in many ESL and EFL countries that most of the people do not need to study English literature, whereas they certainly need to study English language. Mastery of English language has direct practical utility, because it prepares them for life by enabling them to perform different tasks efficiently. In some situations, mastery of English ensures a secure and lucrative

job. From a purely utilitarian point of view, mastery of English language seems to be essential.

It is sometimes thought that there is no such utilitarian justification for the teaching of literature. The study of literature is sometimes viewed as a luxury and it is thought to have no relevance to practical day-to-day life. When the teaching of English was initiated in many countries like India and Iraq, the teaching of English was synonymous with the teaching of English literature. Only recently have academicians started making a clear distinction between English language and English literature.

The most important justification for the study of literature has been that it is possible to master the language and improve our competence in it through the study of literature. 'Language through literature' has been a guiding slogan for many experts in the field. The study of literature provides exposure to the use of language in its best form. Literature provides rich contexts in which lexical and syntactic items are made memorable. Through extensive reading of literary texts, students are exposed to the effective use of language. Literature helps in extending the intermediate or advanced learners' awareness of language. Literature is authentic teaching material in the sense that it is not written with a specific purpose of teaching a language and it has a rich variety in it. Its appeal and significance are for all times. Collie and Slater (1987) note, 'Literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body of written material which is "important" in the sense that it says something about fundamental human issues, and which is enduring rather than ephemeral' (p.3). For example, readers have been enjoying and interpreting Shakespeare's plays for the last four centuries and critics have been still analyzing them from fresh perspectives.



Literature acquaints readers with various aspects of life and gives them a rich insight into it. It has an ennobling influence on readers and makes them more open-minded. It gives them self-knowledge and a balanced view of life. Brumfit and Carter (1986) remark, 'Teaching literature introduces learners to view of the world, and allows them to define themselves through contact with other's experience. Not only the contact of literature but also what we do with it needs to be debated' (p. 215). In this way the study of literature serves liberal humanistic goals.

As mentioned above, the value of teaching literature to learners of English has been debated and discussed since 1960's. There has been a distinct reaction against the use of literature in the English classroom. Various arguments were put forward against the use of literary texts in a language classroom. Literature is seen as an individualistic and complex use of language very different from the ordinary use of language in day-to-day communication. According to Hill (1986), many experts consider literary English 'as language unlikely to be used in every day life and not related to the language which the students would finally produce nor the roles they hoped to fill' (p.11). Therefore, it cannot help second or foreign language learners in mastering the English language. However, it is generally accepted that the study of literature is very useful to someone who has already mastered the English language. It may be pointed out that the study of literature cannot help students in developing their basic linguistic competence.

Literature is characterized by a deviant and special use of language. In literary texts, there are often phonological, syntactic, lexical, morphological, semantic and even graphological deviations. It is a marked use of language. Therefore, it cannot help students in acquiring ordinary language. Some experts believe that the study of literature

should be reserved for only the advanced learners of the English language. That is why Brumfit and Carter (1986) observe, ‘Recent approaches to language teaching have ignored literature teaching’ (p.32).

It may be concluded that there are certainly advantages in teaching literature to language learners. But syllabus designers need to ensure the appropriateness of literary texts to different levels of linguistic competence. Students need to be exposed to texts from different fields of life and some of the texts can be literary texts. In terms of content and language, they must be suitable to learners’ level of competence. The most crucial factor is how the teacher exploits literary texts to teach normal language to students. An imaginative teacher can engage students in different tasks related to literary texts.

In the study of literature, the student’s individual response is very important and literature provides opportunities for expression of a personal point of view and also for debate and discussion. This can enhance the student’s linguistic and communicative competence. It will be pointed out later that personal response questions are very significant in the testing of literature. In this way literature is a valuable resource in the study and teaching of English and it should be used for developing a student’s linguistic and literary competence.

#### **1.4 The Teaching of Literature and the Development of Literary Competence**

Chomsky (1965) makes a vital distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. The term ‘Linguistic Competence’ refers to the abstract knowledge of a language internalized by a native speaker. ‘Linguistic Performance’ on the other hand,

refers to language behaviour of the user of a language. Competence is required for a consistent and sustained performance. Competence is an aspect of knowledge, whereas performance is affected by a number of practical considerations. The distinction between competence and performance is similar to the one between 'langue' and 'parole' made by Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure believes that language belongs to the speech community and that society is the repository of the abstract knowledge of language. For Chomsky, the individual native speaker has competence in the language and it is made possible by the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) within him.

For a linguist and a language teacher, a student's competence is much more important than his performance. A grammarian's task is to capture the native speaker's intuition about his language. A grammar must be based on the native speaker's competence and not on his performance, because even the native speaker's performance can be faulty and he can make errors. A language teacher's aim should be to enhance students' linguistic competence. Development of linguistic competence naturally leads to effective performance. This enables students to perform successfully in real-life situations. A good language test must examine a student's linguistic competence and not just his performance, which can be affected by various factors.

Chomsky has had a significant influence on other thinkers and Chomsky's followers have proposed other similar terms. Hymes (1972) has proposed the concept of 'Communicative Competence'. Communicative Competence emphasizes the abstract knowledge required for communicating successfully in real-life situations. No doubt, linguistic competence is an important component of communicative competence. However, the idea of communicative competence includes a lot of other faculties except linguistic competence

like politeness strategies and choice of words and structures appropriate to the context of language.

Recently the term 'pragmatic competence' has also been used. Language is used never in isolation, but always in social contexts to perform different actions. Every utterance has a number of implied meanings depending on the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the listener and different aspects of the speech situation and the speech event. The concept of pragmatic competence goes beyond the concept of linguistic competence.

When a novel, play or poem is explored over a period of time, the students begin to inhabit the text. The more a student interacts with a text, the richer is his understanding and appreciation of the text. He feels close to certain characters and can empathise with them. The language used by the author becomes more and more transparent and communicates more to him. He is then fully involved with the text and he develops insight into the text.

A literature teacher's job is to develop students' literary competence, i.e. the students' abstract knowledge of literature which he has internalized and developed through continuous exposure to literary works. The teacher should not only give students a lot of information about literary works and expect students to remember it and reproduce it in examinations. The teacher must distinguish between the teaching of literature and the teaching about literature. In most contexts of literature teaching particularly in ESL and EFL contexts, there is a lot of teaching about literature. It may be noted that the students' close and careful reading of literary texts is of vital importance in the study of literature.

It may be said that the development of literary competence makes possible the students' literary performance. Literary performance may manifest itself in two ways--through creative writing on the part of students or through the development of their critical abilities. A student with sound literary competence may be able to write creatively and later may become a poet or short story writer. Students with literary competence are able to make independent critical judgments and substantiate and justify their personal views. All the teaching programmes in literature need to be evaluated with reference to the development of literary competence on the part of students,

### **1.5 The Relationship between Teaching and Testing**

Every teaching programme in either English language or literature has one or more tests based on it. It would be incomplete without the component of testing. Tests enable the teachers and syllabus designers to ascertain to what extent the objectives of teaching have been fulfilled. Evaluation of students indicates whether there have been desired changes in learners' verbal behaviour. Tests also enable the teachers and the society to distinguish among students and rate them according to their achievements. Testing may, therefore, be considered an integral part of teaching. Tests may be conducted before the beginning of a teaching programme, during it or at the end of it. According to Els et al (1984), 'The context in which language testing takes place is usually language teaching. In the context of teaching, tests do not only have the purpose of measuring the language behaviour of individuals, but they are also useful instruments for evaluating programmes by means of an analysis of the results of an entire group of learners' (p.313). Madsen (1983) remarks, 'Tests can provide insight into ways that we can improve the evaluation process itself...

Tests... can benefit students, teachers, and even administrators by confirming progress that has been made and showing how we can best redirect our future efforts' (p.5).

There are two major types of evaluation--formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Usually evaluation is equated with summative evaluation. The two types will be discussed in detail in Section 1.7. Formative evaluation consists of questions asked and tasks allotted to students during the teaching programme, whereas summative evaluation consists of the formal end-of-the-year examination intended to assign marks or grades to students. Generally it is accepted that formative evaluation needs to be considered an important part of teaching, because it offers valuable feedback about the syllabus, teaching materials, teaching methodology and techniques and the skills and competence and performance of the two important participants in the teaching programme the teacher and the student

## **1.6 Evaluation, Assessment and Testing**

As mentioned above, teaching and testing are closely interrelated and may be considered to be two sides of the same coin. Sometimes the term 'evaluation' is also used in this context. It basically means assigning a value to something. It is possible to evaluate a literary text or someone's contribution to a cause. As a part of the teaching programme, evaluation of the student's achievement or progress made during a specific span of time is important. Similarly, it is desirable to evaluate other components of the teaching situation like the curriculum, teaching methodology and techniques, tests and examinations, students' motivation and interests, teachers' linguistic competence and teaching skills and the relevance of the teaching programme to needs of the society. Weiss (1972) defines

evaluation as ‘the systematic gathering of information for the purpose of making decisions’ (as quoted in Bachman, 1990, p.22). The term ‘assessment’ is sometimes used in this context. Assessment can be defined as an approach to collecting information and making inferences about the ability of a student or the quality of a course on the basis of different sources of evidence. It can be carried out by means of tests, questionnaires, interviews, observation etc.

It may be pointed out that ‘evaluation’, ‘assessment’ and ‘testing’ are not synonymous terms. Evaluation is the broadest of the three terms and it encompasses both assessment and testing in order to make decisions. A test is one of the tools of assessment and therefore, a component of evaluation. However, sometimes the terms ‘evaluation and ‘assessment’ are used synonymously. Evaluation can be made subjectively (i.e. impressionistically) or objectively. It can also be made on the basis of one’s past experience. Madsen (1983) remarks, ‘Tests can foster learning... by their diagnostic characteristics (p.4).

Another term used in this connection is ‘measurement’. Measurement involves quantification with reference to a pre-determined norm or scale. Both evaluation and testing often involve measurement because students’ performance is often indicated in terms of marks from zero to 100. It is interesting to note that in the testing of literature the full range of the scale is generally not used. In most contexts, the range of marking is between 20 and 80. Even a very bad answer is not given zero and an excellent answer is not awarded more than 80 marks. No student is awarded 100 marks. Interestingly, in objective questions, only the two ends of the scale are used. That is, an answer to an objective question gets zero% or 100% marks and no intermediate points of the scale are

used for marking. It may be pointed out that evaluation can also be done qualitatively and without any reference to a scale or measurement.

An academic programme has tests or examinations as its part. Tests and examinations are usually used for pedagogical purposes either to motivate students or to sum up their performance. Madsen (1983) comments, 'Properly made English tests can help create positive attitudes toward instruction by giving students a sense of accomplishment and a feeling that the teacher's evaluation of them matches what he has taught them' (p.4). Sometimes the terms 'test' and 'examination' are used synonymously. However, it is necessary to make a distinction between the two terms. Tests can be formal or informal and they can be used for the purposes of formal or informal evaluation. Examinations are usually formal and a lot of official machinery is generally used in conducting them. That is why there are sometimes surprise tests, but no surprise examinations. Examinations have to be announced formally in advance and students have to be given time for preparing for them. No such preparation is always required for tests. Examinations are periodic, whereas tests can be periodic or aperiodic. That is, examinations are held usually after fixed intervals of time, whereas tests can be held at any point of time during the teaching programme.

The present study is a study of literature testing at the undergraduate level in Iraq and India. It may be clarified here that the data collected for the study relate to examinations held in the two countries and it is not based on all the tests in the two contexts. The reason is that there is no easy access to informal tests and the questions asked by the teachers during teaching, because no objective record is available for these tests. The study is based on an analysis of the questions asked in formal examinations in the two countries.



## **1.7 Types of Tests**

Tests or examinations play a vital role in the conduct of a teaching-learning programme. They provide us with valuable information about their effectiveness and their influence on the learners' linguistic and communicative behaviour. According to Bachman (1990), 'Language testing both serves and is served by research in language acquisition and language teaching.....Language tests are....Frequently used as sources of information in evaluating the effectiveness of different approaches to language teaching. As sources of feedback on learning and teaching, language tests can thus provide useful input into the process of language teaching' (pp. 2-3) .

Carroll (1968) thinks, 'A psychological or educational test is a procedure designed to elicit certain behaviour from which one can make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual' (p.46). In this sense a test is an instrument of measurement intended to elicit a specific sample of an individual's behaviour. All the linguists and experts in ELT seem to agree that tests can be valuable sources of information about the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Tests help us in collecting necessary information for making two types of decisions-- decisions about individuals and decisions about the teaching programme. Decisions about individuals relate to students' level of competence before, during or after an educational programme and also factors like their aptitude and motivation. Decisions about programmes relate to the effectiveness of the teaching materials and the methodology of teaching and the feedback about the programme itself. Decisions about the individuals are

referred to as micro-evaluation and decisions about programmes are referred to as macro-evaluation.

A reference has been made to formative and summative evaluation above. According to the uses and purposes of tests, the two major types of tests are formative tests and summative tests. They serve two distinct functions. A formative test is conducted during a course of instruction and it is a part of the programme of instruction. It consists of questions asked by the teacher during the teaching programme and other tasks like puzzle-solving, discussions, presentations and role-playing. Most of these tests are conducted informally and teaching is modified in the light of the feedback received. They shed valuable light on the process of learning. The outcome of these tests is not important in itself, but it aids students in improving their process of learning. A formative test encourages students to think and do activities independently. Formative tests are spread over a long period of time and occur very frequently during the programme of teaching. It is an important part of the instructional process. Its purpose is to ensure that the goals of instruction have been achieved, identify problematic aspects and do remedial work to improve the process of instruction. According to Richards et al. (1985), formative evaluation involves 'the process of providing information to curriculum developers during the development of a curriculum or programme, in order to improve it. Formative evaluation is also used in syllabus design and the development of language teaching programmes and materials' (p.110). A summative test is typically conducted at the end of the semester or academic year. Its aim is to measure the amount of learning which has taken place and it sums up the students' performance during the course. These tests are always conducted formally and a lot of administrative machinery of the university is

involved in this. It is often a stressful experience for students. Many thinkers believe that a summative test is not necessarily a fair measurement of a student's capacity because it gives too much importance to his performance at a specific point of time and does not take into account the student's progress at different points of time during the course. It is possible that even a good student's performance is not up to the mark on a particular day. The foregoing discussion makes it clear that both formative and summative tests are significant in the educational programme and that there should be a number of tests, both formative and summative, at frequent intervals and the students' final grade should depend on his cumulative performance in all these tests.

Tests may be classified according to the purposes and content of testing. They can also be classified according to whether they are based on a particular course of instruction and whether they follow it. The major types of tests which are not linked to a course of instruction are language aptitude test, proficiency test, diagnostic test and placement test. A language aptitude test is intended to find out about someone's natural ability to learn a language. Language aptitude is a combination of different abilities like the ability to recognize distinct sound patterns, the ability to understand different grammatical functions of words in sentences, the ability to work out meanings inductively and the ability of memorization. Such tests are particularly used in ESL and EFL situations. It is assumed that a person with high language aptitude can learn a language more easily and faster than a person with low language aptitude.

A proficiency test is intended to measure how much of a language a student has already learnt. It is not related to a particular course of instruction, but it measures the student's general level of competence in a language. However, the student's proficiency may be a

result of language courses that he has attended so far. The focus is not on a particular course of instruction. Some of proficiency tests have been designed and standardized for use all over the world. For example, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) are the tests designed to test proficiency of foreign students who wish to study in the USA, UK, Australia and Canada.

A diagnostic test is intended to find out a learner's strengths and weaknesses with reference to a particular language. Its purpose is to find out what skills have been acquired by the learner and to what extent. It gives us knowledge of what the student has learnt or not learnt in the areas of phonology, syntax, lexis etc. Diagnostic tests are particularly useful for designing remedial courses for second or foreign language learners and they are typically administered before the beginning of language courses.

A placement test is designed to decide the appropriate level in a teaching programme or course which a student should join. For example, some institutes have a number of levels at which courses are organized and they wish to decide which particular level is the most suitable for any learner. A placement test is not very different from a proficiency test, but it has a specific purpose. Sometimes a placement test is also conducted to decide which job the student should be offered.

The major type of test which is related to a particular course of instruction is an achievement test. It is intended to assess the student's competence and performance in relation to a course of instruction. This is typically conducted at the end of a course. It enables the teacher to find out to what extent the objectives of the course of instruction have been achieved by the learners and provides valuable feedback to the teacher. Most

achievement tests are formal examinations and the students' achievement is rated in terms of marks or grades. It may be pointed out that the data used in this study relate to achievement tests conducted by ten universities in Iraq and India. The other types of tests mentioned earlier do not form part of the data used in this study.

According to another classification of tests, they are of two types--discrete point test and integrative test. A discrete point test is a test which measures the student's knowledge of individual language items. A grammar test may have different sections on different grammar topics and only a particular area of knowledge is assessed at a particular time. The assumption in this test is that language consists of different sub-systems and skills and they are made up of individual elements which can be examined separately. In this way, a discrete point test item relates to a very narrow area of language proficiency. Many objective questions, particularly multiple choice questions, are examples of discrete point test items.

An integrative test finds out whether a learner is able to use several discrete points or different language skills at the same time. The actual use of language is a combination of discrete points used in consonance with each other effectively. An essay is a good example of an integrative test, because in writing an essay the student has to use his knowledge of lexical items, grammatical points, organization of content, spelling etc. Such tests are more life-like because in real life situations students have to produce connected texts. Since both the types of test are useful in their own ways, it is suggested that there should be a proper balance between discrete point tests and integrative tests.

It is possible to classify tests according to the medium of language involved. Speech and writing are the two mediums of language and correspondingly, there are tests of speaking and writing. Testing students' oral proficiency has recently become important with the advent of communicative language teaching. Speaking tests examine the students' ability to pronounce words correctly, use accent and intonation appropriately and converse effectively in different situations. Sometimes they involve oral presentations on the part of students. Most of the examinations conducted in universities are written tests. They check the students' ability to write continuous texts or pieces of composition. Students are expected to be able to write coherently and consistently and develop ideas in a convincing manner. Written tests are considered to be easier to administer because the scripts can be assessed at any time and reevaluation is possible in case of doubt about the fairness of the assessment.

Tests can also be classified into objective tests and subjective tests. The criterion involved here is whether the test item has one or more correct answers and whether the examiner's personal judgment plays any role in assessment. According to Bachman (1990), 'In an objective test the correctness of the test taker's response is determined entirely by predetermined criteria so that no judgment is required on the part of scorers. In a subjective test, on the other hand, the scorers must make a judgment about the correctness of the response based on her subjective interpretation of the scoring criteria' (p.76). An objective question ideally has one and only one correct answer and all other answers are clearly wrong. An essay type or short answer question has multiple possible answers and the answer cannot be standardized. The answer to an objective question is very short, i.e. one word, phrase or sentence. The answer to an objective question is specific and definite.

The answer to an essay type or short answer question is much longer ranging between 50 words and 600 words. The answer to such a question is more general and comprehensive. An objective question is assigned only one or two marks, whereas an essay type or short answer question is allotted marks between 5 and 25. There is almost no scope for the reflection of the students' individuality in the answer to an objective question, whereas an essay type or short answer question offers abundant scope for reflection of the students' individuality and their personal responses to literary texts.

According to the way in which the results of tests can be interpreted, there are two types of tests--norm-referenced test and criterion-referenced test. In a norm-referenced test, test scores are interpreted with reference to the performance of a certain group of individuals. The 'norm group' consists of a large group of individuals who are similar to the test takers. The norm group's performance is used as a reference point for evaluating the performance of other students who take the test. Standardized tests like TOEFL and IELTS are examples of norm-referenced tests. Standardized tests are generally designed to enable us to compare the performance of a particular pupil to the performance of large numbers of other pupils and thus they enable us to evaluate members of a group in relation to one another. Objectivity of evaluation is very important in such tests. Such tests have been carefully examined for equivalence on the basis of empirical research.

A criterion-referenced test measures a students' performance with reference to a particular standard or 'criterion level of ability' (Bachman, 1990, p.74). In this type of test, a student's performance is not compared to any other student's performance. Students are assessed with reference to a particular level of performance or mastery of

course content. A diagnostic test is a good example of a criterion-referenced test. Marks or grades awarded to students correspond to different levels of performance.

It may be pointed out that language tests can be either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced. As pointed out above, all standardized tests are norm-referenced tests, and language tests used in university examinations are criterion-referenced tests. On the other hand, almost all literature tests are criterion-referenced tests. There are almost no standardized tests in the field of literature testing.

### **1.8 Types of Test Items**

A test item is a question or element of a test which requires a response or answer. Different types of test items are used in language and literature testing. Four types of test items have been identified in the literature on testing – alternate response item, closed-ended response item, open-ended response item and structured response item.

An alternate-response item gives students a choice between two alternatives—true or false, correct or incorrect, yes or no etc. Such questions are sometimes called polarity questions. In a sense, these are the easiest types of questions, because there are 50% chances of being right even without knowing the answer. A closed-ended response item or fixed response item is similar to an alternate response item, but the difference is that in this type of question, there are three or more alternatives from which students have to select the most appropriate choice. Multiple choice questions exemplify this type of question and usually there are four choices given. Only one of them is the correct answer and the wrong answers are called distractors. An open-ended response item or free response item gives freedom to answer the question in different ways. Students do not



have to choose from any alternatives and there is no standardized answer. Paragraph writing or an essay type question is an example of this type of question. In this response, students typically produce a text and this reflects the student's individual personality. Most descriptive questions on literature belong to this type. In a structured response item, there is some guidance or help offered to students and the examiner controls the student's response at least to some extent. Questions asking students to fill in the blanks or guided composition (in which students are given some leading questions or points) are examples of this type.

### **1.9 Test Methods**

Several research studies indicate that the methods used for evaluating language ability influence students' performance on language tests. The performance depends on the students' linguistic ability and the characteristics of the test method used. It is also affected by individual attributes like students' cognitive and affective characteristics, age, sex, social background and the amount of preparation.

A number of descriptions of the facets of test methods are available in literature. Bachman (1990) identifies five major categories of test method facet-- the testing environment, the test rubric, the nature of the input that the test taker receives, the nature of the expected response to the input and the relationship between the input and the response.

Students' performance is often affected by the testing environment. The testing environment includes the place and the equipment used in administering the test, the people involved, the time of test and physical conditions. Familiar place and personnel

contribute to better performance on the part of students. The same is true of familiar equipment. Students' performance may be better or worse at different times. Physical conditions like noise, temperature, seating arrangement and lighting also affect students' performance.

The rubric of the test indicates how students are expected to proceed in taking the test. The important parts of the rubric are test organization, time allocation and instructions. A language test usually consists of several parts which contain test items or questions. Sometimes each part of the test serves different difficulty levels. Parts of a test may be weighted differently in terms of marks.

The time limit for the test affects students' performance. In some tests, students may not manage to answer all the questions and marks depend on how fast students can answer them. Such tests are called 'speeded tests'. In other tests, students are given sufficient time and the purpose is to test their language ability. Such tests are called 'power tests'.

Tests instructions are of crucial importance. They may be presented in the source language or target language. They specify the process required to take the test and the way in which students are expected to perform the tasks. Performance is facilitated by sample tests or specimen answers. The criteria for assessment need to be explicitly stated. For example, it needs to be pointed out whether there is negative marking for wrong answers in an objective test. Obviously, there are no single correct answers for questions which require students to describe their personal experience or express their personal feelings. In such cases, students should know in advance what they will be marked for.

The input and the expected response affect students' performance on tests. The input refers to the information contained in the task. It is useful to make a distinction between the expected response and the student's actual response. The expected response can be indicated through test design, appropriate instructions and task specification. The approximation of actual response to the expected one would give students high marks or grades. The input can be either oral or written. The expected response can be linguistic or non-linguistic. Length and propositional content are important aspects of the response. The amount of new information that the answer is supposed to contain is also an important criterion and this reflects the importance given to the student's originality and imagination. Students need to have the ability to control the formal organization of language. Sometimes this is referred to as 'organizational competence'. Pragmatically speaking, the function of an examination question is not to elicit information, but to find out whether the student has knowledge of content and whether he can present it well. He should also be able to use the appropriate variety of language in terms of register and style. Usually most of the examination answers are expected to be in the formal style.

According to Bachman (1990), the applications of these factors are in four areas--the description of language tests, the design of tests, the validation of tests and the formulation of hypotheses for research in language testing. Description of language tests makes it possible to compare and evaluate different language tests. Evaluation of existing tests enables us to be aware of their shortcomings and improve upon them while designing new tests. The validation of these tests should be based on a detailed description of abilities to be tested and the facets of test methods. Research on language testing needs to be conducted so that tests are more reliable and valid.

The test methods discussed above are mainly with reference to language testing. However, they are equally relevant to and useful in literature testing. Performance on literature tests may be seen as dependent on the students' linguistic and critical abilities and the characteristics of the test method. It is to be noted that students having different socio-cultural backgrounds and personalities would perform differently in literature tests. Students' preparedness for a particular literature test is an advantage. Testing environment affects the performance of literature students to some extent. It is felt that the test rubric is a very important part of the test method. Apart from marks and time allocation, test organization and instructions are of vital significance. The relative importance of different parts of questions needs to be indicated and the instructions should be clear and unambiguous. Sometimes it is believed that the longer a literature question is, the more explicit it is. The input must be in appropriate language and it should indicate different facets of the expected response. If literature questions are too general, there is no control over the expected response. Distribution of new information is a crucial factor in the response. In literature answers new information refers to the students' individual response to and perception of literary texts and there would necessarily be something unique about each student's response.

The four applications of this framework suggested by Bachman (1990) are pertinent to literature testing. It is necessary to describe objectively and in detail the existing literature tests and analyse them. This should lead us to better designs of literature tests so that they are relatively more valid and reliable. The formulation of various hypotheses for conducting research in literature testing is the need of the hour.

The present study is a modest attempt to do for literature what Bachman (1990) has suggested for language tests. There is analysis and description of existing literature tests in a few Iraqi and Indian universities so that more valid and reliable questions on literature can be set in the future.

## **1.10 The Relationship between Literature Teaching and Literature**

### **Testing**

The main purpose of the teaching of literature is to develop a student's literary competence and make him an independent reader of literature. The most important aim of literature teaching is to provide the learners with the tools to interpret a text in order to make competent critical judgments and help them to explore literary texts and express their perceptions and views using their communication skills. A subsidiary aim of teaching of literature can also be to improve the students' proficiency in English. Literature helps the students to develop their confidence in the language and stimulates them to enjoy reading. As literature offers a wide range of materials, teaching literature can be interesting and the teacher may follow different approaches in dealing with different texts.

The teachers of English literature should themselves be efficient readers of literature and they should be able to enjoy it and be inspired by it. They should generate love of literature in the minds of students and encourage them to explore the subtleties of literature. Students must be at the centre of various activities in literature classes. The teachers should not only convey their interpretations of and reactions to literary works to students, but also invite them to interpret texts in their own ways. Students' participation

in interpretation and discussions helps in developing their literary competence. Some literary texts are open-ended and they may be opaque to some extent. Students should be able to come out with their own interpretations and be able to justify them. Making inferences is also important in the study of literature. Literature classes must be stimulating and enjoyable to students.

The traditional teaching of literature particularly in ESL and EFL contexts has been largely teacher-centred. The teachers' authority is considered to be supreme and unquestionable. The teachers' duty is thought to be to transport knowledge and information to students. The traditional teaching of literature does not encourage students to think on their own, come out with their own analysis and formulate opinions of their own. The students only repeat the teachers' or critics' views and they are never independent of critics and their teachers. The teaching in such a mechanical manner is unable to foster the students' love of knowledge and makes the students unable to experience the happiness of studying literature. The teachers should adopt innovative techniques in teaching and give more attention to the individual experiences of the students.

A distinction needs to be made between teaching literature and teaching about literature. Teaching literature involves giving students insight into the study of literature so that they can struggle with literary texts effectively and independently. Teaching about literature, on the other hand, involves giving a lot of information about literature. Students are passive recipients of this information and their job is often to take down notes, remember them or learn them by heart and reproduce them in examinations. In most cases, students do not have texts and therefore, there is no possibility of students reading literary texts.

Exposure to and struggle with texts is of paramount importance in the study of literature and it is imperative for students to read literary texts on their own. Reading of texts is a fundamental aspect of literary studies. Most teachers believe that they teach literature, but in fact they teach a lot about literature.

The most favoured technique of teaching in most such cases is lecturing. Teachers typically lecture about the author's life, social background, theme of the text and other aspects like symbolism, the author's point of view and his message, the use of figurative language and imagery. In this technique of teaching, students learn everything about the literary text, but they do not have any first-hand experience of the literary text. Therefore, the study of literature is reduced to an exercise in memory. In countries where English has been taught as a second language or foreign language, there has been a long tradition of teaching literature through lecturing.

In different parts of the world literature teaching and literature testing have been routine activities for a large number of years. But there has been little correspondence between the aims and techniques of literature teaching on the one hand and the aims and techniques of literature testing on the other hand. In literature tests a number of questions are asked and no one is sure whether the aims of literature teaching have been fulfilled. Most of the questions are answered exclusively on the basis of memory of second-hand information collected from various secondary sources.

In such cases, the most important activity of a student is to get hold of some information about the literary text, remember it and reproduce it in the examination. Most students have no access to literary texts and even if they are available, they do not read them.

Without reading the original text, they try to learn by heart its criticism. It is obvious from this that they do not study literature at all, but they only study about literature. Most questions asked on literary texts are such that they test only the students' knowledge about literature. In most such situations, the teachers do not really teach literature, but only teach about literature, using the sole technique of lecturing. Very general and broad questions are asked on literature and they do not test the students' first-hand acquaintance with the text. Even the assessment is indifferent and marks are often awarded on the basis of the length of answers and the examiners' general subjective impressions.

In most contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language, essay type questions are asked, sometimes without any particular focus. Very long answers are expected and the relevance of the answers to the questions is overlooked. The most important aspect of assessment in many cases is the quantity of the answer and not the quality. Sometimes, the students' answers to the questions are the same, because they are dependent on their memory of the explanations offered by teachers. Alternatively, students learn by heart answers from cheap guides and bazaar notes and reproduce them in response to any questions on the topic. As a result, answers are often not relevant to the questions asked. Many students do not even read the questions carefully and they have no ability to interpret the questions and understand their scope. Students do not have the ability to answer questions on the basis of their own knowledge and it is difficult for them to be independent.

The foregoing remarks suggest that radical changes need to be introduced in both literature teaching and literature testing. There is a dynamic relationship between the two. Improvement in literature teaching will result into improvement in literature testing and



more efficient literature testing will have the backwash effect of enriching the quality of literature teaching. Literature tests should primarily assess students' literary competence and bring out the best even from average students. Like the study of literature, literature testing should be stimulating and enjoyable and it needs to be considered an integral part of literature teaching.

This study is primarily motivated by a desire to review the testing of literature in Iraq (a foreign language situation) and in India (a second language situation) and to suggest possible modifications in both the teaching and testing of literature. It is believed that change is need of the hour and that it is desirable and possible to reform the situation of teaching and testing of English literature. The driving force of this study is optimism that by making students and teachers the agents of change, conducting intensive teacher training programmes and creating a general awareness, radical changes can be successfully implemented in the two countries.

### **1.11 Language Testing and Literature Testing**

A substantial body of material and research work is available on language testing. A large number of books and articles have been written on this. Bachman (1990) notes, 'Advances in language testing do not take place in a vacuum; they are stimulated by advances in our understanding of the processes of language acquisition and language teaching. And developments in language testing can provide both practical tools and theoretical insights for further research and development in language acquisition and language teaching' (p.3). It is remarkable that there is a journal called Language Testing devoted to this important aspect of the curriculum. Language testing has a long history of

research. It may be mentioned that the British Council and the University of Cambridge have published English Language Testing Service: Specimen Materials Booklet. Some of the important works on language testing are Lado (1961), Clark (1978), Palmer and Spolsky (1975), Allen and Davies (1977) and Bachman (1990).

There is no comparable body of material and research work on literature testing. In fact, literature testing has been one of the neglected areas of study. Much less research on literature testing has been conducted. Some skeletal work has been done on the teaching and testing of English literature in India. Rao and Pushpalatha (1995) and Durant (1986 and 1987) are notable works in this area. Probably not a single study of the testing of English literature in Iraq has been undertaken so far. It is hoped that more such studies will be made in ENL, ESL and EFL contexts. Such studies will give us a comprehensive perspective on the teaching and testing of literature in various contexts.

This section tries to deal with some of the fundamental concepts in language teaching and to view them with reference to literature testing. Tests may be seen as means of gathering information about different components of the curriculum. They are constructed according to certain criteria, which ensure the quality of this information. The most important criteria are reliability and validity. Standardized language tests are developed by professionals belonging to different disciplines and not necessarily by classroom teachers. Professional tests are generally based on a manual containing information about the methods used in designing them. These guidelines are useful to classroom teachers in constructing and analysing their own tests and interpreting test results. Literature tests are usually prepared only by classroom teachers and they are not standardized.

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which 'a test is internally consistent and consistent over time' (Els et al. 1984, p.317). A test is reliable if it gives the same results if it is given on different occasions or when it is administered by different teachers. The test-retest method is one way of ensuring reliability. In this method the same test is given to the same students twice and stable test scores indicate reliability. Internal consistency of a test can be ensured using the split-half method. In this method the test is divided into two halves, sometimes into odd and even test items. Roughly equal scores on the two halves indicate reliability. Sometimes test items are divided into two halves randomly. This is also known as 'internal consistency reliability', in which different parts of a test are consistent or homogeneous with each other. Usually long tests are considered to be more reliable than short tests. Sometimes 'parallel forms' are used to ensure the reliability of a test. These are different forms of a test which are intended to measure the same abilities or skills on the part of students. They use the same methods of testing and generally they are equal in length and difficulty levels. They are also called 'equivalent forms' or 'alternate forms'. If students score similar marks on parallel forms of a test, this is referred to as 'parallel form reliability' or 'alternate reliability'. A formula has been developed for calculating the reliability of a test by taking into account the reliability of shorter and longer versions of the same test. This is known as the 'Spearman-Brown Formula'. No systematic attempts seem to have been made to check the reliability of literature tests. The same literature tests are generally not administered to the same students twice and experts are not sure about internal consistency of literature tests.

One of the problem areas is intra-rater reliability and inter-rater reliability. Intra-rater reliability refers to consistency of test scores if the same script is assessed by the same

examiner on two different occasions. Inter-rater reliability refers to consistency of test scores if the same script is assessed by two or more different examiners. In objective tests, usually there is greater intra-rater reliability. Most of literature tests consist of long answer or essay-type questions. Experience indicates that there is very little intra-rater and inter-rater reliability as far as these questions are concerned. There is always greater intra-rater and inter-rater reliability as far as objective questions is concerned. But very few objective questions appear to be set in literature tests.

Validity is perhaps the most important concept in test evaluation. It refers to the degree to which the test measures what it is intended to measure. The same test cannot be valid for all purposes and all groups. According to Bachman (1990), 'Validity ... is concerned with identifying the factors that produce the reliable variance in test scores' (p. 239). A valid test is always reliable, but a reliable test is not necessarily valid. According to Bachman (1990), validity refers to 'the extent to which the inferences or decisions we make on the basis of test scores are meaningful, appropriate and useful' (p.25). A paper setter or an examiner must be aware of the students' abilities and skills which are being tested. Tests devised for native speakers of a language may not be valid for ESL/EFL learners.

There are different types of validity suggested by experts. Content validity is based on the degree to which a test adequately measures particular skills or behaviour. For example, a test in pronunciation has content validity only if it examines a student's mastery of both segmental and supra-segmental features of English. Construct validity refers to the degree to which test items are based on the essential aspects of the relevant theory. For example, a test of communication skills should be based on the theory of communicative competence. Predictive validity refers to the degree to which a test accurately predicts

students' performance in the future. For example, an aptitude test or a diagnostic test must have predictive validity. Sometimes a test is compared with another standard test which is a valid indicator of students' abilities. This is referred to as 'criterion-related validity'. 'Empirical validity' of a test involves the comparison of a test with one or more criterion measures. Such comparisons may involve other independent measures (e.g. the teacher's assessment) at the same time. This is called 'concurrent validity'. If a comparison is made with other independent measures obtained at a later point of time, it is 'predicative validity'. Sometimes a test is evaluated on the basis of an observer's subjective judgment. The degree to which a test seems to measure the abilities or skills that it is intended to measure is referred to as 'face validity'. According to Bachman (1990), 'Reliability is a quality of test scores, while validity is a quality of the interpretations or uses that are made of test scores' (p.26).

In order to ensure validity of literature tests, it is necessary to be clear about the objectives of literature testing. In case of subjective or long answer questions, paper setters and examiners are not aware of the specific abilities and skills being tested. Such questions involve a number of abilities and skills (e.g. knowledge of content, acquaintance with texts, planning and organization and mastery of vocabulary and grammar memory). The fewer the abilities to be tested, the greater is the validity of test items. In responding to literature questions, a number of students abilities and skills are involved and therefore, it is difficult to confirm the validity of such questions. It is argued later in this study that intra-rater variability and inter-rater variability are the major problems in assessing literature answers and that it is possible to reduce these two types of variability.

There are a number of other relevant factors in language and literature testing. One of the crucial factors is time limit on the administration of a test. Usually most tests have a restricted time limit. Such tests are called 'speed tests'. The students are expected to answer questions fast and they cannot spend much time on thinking and planning the answers. In literature tests, time is usually a great constraint, because students are expected to write very long answers in a short span of time. Therefore, it becomes a test of memory and the ability to write speedily. Some students are able to do this by learning by heart, the answers to expected questions. If time is not a relevant factor, such tests are called 'power tests'. In these tests, there is either no time limit or a very long time limit. Many experts believe that power tests are more suitable for literature testing, because students can comfortably plan their material and give out their best performance.

Tests instructions are another significant factor. In all situations they must be clear and unambiguous and it should be impossible for students to interpret them in different ways. The marks allotted to each question and the options should be clearly indicated. Many times the instructions express paper setters' expectations regarding students' answers. Sometimes the expected length of the answer is also mentioned. It is felt that detailed instructions for literature questions would lead to relatively greater uniformity and less individual variation.

Test format is a very important factor. The stimulus and the response may be verbal or non-verbal. Most traditional tests expect verbal responses. Non-verbal responses can be in the form of pictures or diagrams, activities or tasks performed. It may be suggested that in both language and literature testing, there should be a balance between verbal and non-verbal responses.

Response type can be divided into three main categories--closed-ended tests, restricted-response tests and open-ended tests. Most closed-ended tests are objective and students themselves do not have to formulate their own answers. Examples of such tests are questions involving multiple choice, matching and identification of true and false statements. Students can answer such questions through guesswork and therefore, such tests should be used only on a limited scale. Restricted-response tests require students to formulate their responses, but the answers are short and predictable. Such tests can be scored objectively. Blank-filling tests are examples of this type. These tests give relatively more freedom to students than closed-ended tests. Open-ended tests require long answers which reflect a number of abilities and skills on the students' part. These are integrative tests. The essay is the best example of this type. It is believed that such tests are the most valid type even in language testing from the point of view of communicative competence. They are very common in literature testing all over the world. A problem in assessing the answers is that of comparability, because there is infinite variation in responses. This problem can be overcome by standardizing tasks, giving clear instructions and using well-defined and explicit criteria in an assessment.

As mentioned earlier, assessment of particularly long answers is problematic due to a wide range of variability. If a number of examiners are involved in assessment, it is desirable for them to agree on a set of criteria before starting the assessment so that there is a fair amount of uniformity among them. It is necessary to ensure the reliability of the marking system. Usually there is global marking for long answer questions. That is, marks are globally awarded based on the impressions about the students' linguistic and literary competence. Many times these marks are given subjectively and there is a wide

variation among different examiners. As a corrective measure to this, componential marking has been suggested. In this, different aspects of answers are rated separately and then marks are totalled. For example, there may be separate marks assigned to content development of ideas, use of vocabulary and grammar, first-hand acquaintance with the texts etc. Sometimes this is referred to as the analytic procedure. Francis (1981) observes that there is not much difference between analytic and impressionistic method of rating. However, it may be suggested that componential marking is preferable in literature testing.

### **1.12 Approaches to Testing**

Recent developments in linguistics, language pedagogy and psychometrics have had influence on language testing in general. There are three main approaches to language testing--the traditional or pre-scientific approach, the psychometric-structuralist or modern approach and the psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic or post-modern approach. Of course, thinking of language testing with reference to these three approaches involves overgeneralization.

In the traditional approach, the teacher is the supreme authority and the students' performance is judged by him subjectively and impressionistically. This approach is described as pre-scientific, because no attention is paid to criteria like reliability and validity and it does not make any use of statistical techniques. This does not mean lack of personal responsibility on the part of the examiner. The commonly used types of tests in this approach are grammar, translation, essay writing and vocabulary. The undesirable



aspect of this approach is that the teachers' authority cannot be easily questioned. The assumption in this approach is that a teacher is always an efficient examiner.

The psychometric-structuralist or modern approach criticizes the traditional approach, because it is not reliable. This approach is an attempt to make testing more reliable. The developments in linguistics and psychometrics have had a substantial influence on this approach. Pioneering work has been done in this direction by Lado (1961). This approach gives importance to the students' competence in language usage and to correct grammatical structure in the use of language. The sentence is considered the highest grammatical unit and therefore, the ability to write correct sentences is thought to be important. In this approach, there was emphasis on the development of standardized tests and discrete-point test items were used. It was insisted in this approach that students' responses must not only be grammatically correct, but they must also be contextually appropriate.

The psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic or post-modern approach, as the term suggests, makes use of latest developments in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. This approach gives importance to communicative competence and therefore, values integrative tests. It is not interested in testing separate language items, but it is interested in measuring 'the total communicative effect of utterance' (Carroll, 1972, p.318). This approach moves from the sentence level to the discourse level and it adopts a functional view of language. It makes use of contextualized tests, in which appropriateness is an important criterion. Special attention is paid to validity of tests.

In recent times a number of direct and indirect tests have been designed and developed for language testing. The cloze test is commonly used now to assess language proficiency. In this test every nth word is deleted and students are expected to supply the missing words. Cloze tests were very popular after 1970's. The difficulty level of the passage and the distance between the deleted words are important factors in deciding the effectiveness of the test. Sometimes there is insistence on the words which occur in the original texts. This is called the 'exact word method'. In some tests, any suitable word is accepted. This is referred to as the 'acceptable word method'. Variation on this test is a multiple choice cloze test, in which alternatives are given for each blank.

Dictation has also been used as an important activity in language testing. A standard dictation task expects a learner to write out an orally presented text. A student needs to understand the text and use punctuation marks appropriately. A variant of dictation is what is called the 'noise test' in which some words are omitted and the student has to supply the missing words on the basis of the context. The situation is similar to speaking on a bad telephone line. Another variant of dictation is what is known as 'elicited imitation', in which students are expected to repeat orally the text which is presented orally. In this type of test, the student does not write anything.

A novel test tried out by some experts is an 'editing test'. In this kind of test, students are expected to remove alien words from a text. This test is constructed by randomly putting in new and irrelevant words into a text. These tests examine whether a student is able to identify irrelevant words and whether he is able to retain all the words which are a part of the text. The editing testing is considered more effective than a cloze test, because it tests the student's ability to deal with a longer text like an essay.

An important recent development is what is known as 'communicative testing'. Obviously, this is intended to assess students' communicative competence. In this approach, there is emphasis on the use of language in real-life situations related to their communicative needs. Such tests naturally consist of a variety of tasks. For such performance tests, qualitative assessment, and not quantitative assessment, is required. Using these tests, productive skills are examined more easily than receptive skills. Els et al (1984) believe that 'communicative testing is still in its infancy' (p.331).

The approaches mentioned above mainly refer to developments in language testing. However, it is necessary and beneficial to think of literature testing in the light of these changes. The traditional approach to literature testing has been authoritarian and subjective. In this approach the teacher's authority is of paramount importance and the marks or grades awarded depend entirely on the teacher's personal impression. As pointed out earlier, this leads to intra-rater and inter-rater variability. Some experts feel that the validity of such a test is questionable. The basic assumption in this approach is that whoever teaches literature can test it. The psychometric-structuralist approach insists on making testing objective, precise and scientific. The implication of this approach to literature testing is that objective tests can be used in evaluating students' competence in the study of literature. It has been indicated elsewhere in this study that objective tests of different types have a significant role to play in literature testing. In the psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic approach, importance is given to integrative tests. In literature testing, usually there are long answer or essay type questions. An important part of literary studies is the psychological and sociological aspects of literature. There are communicative tasks and a large number of abilities and skills are tested at the same time.

Students' linguistic competence, literary competence and communicative competence are all reflected in the answers. Literature questions can be viewed as contextualized test items. In literature answers both grammaticality and appropriateness are important. It has been pointed out that it is possible to make literature test items more valid and less subjective.

The cloze procedure can be used to assess students' literary competence as well as their linguistic competence. It is challenging to students' linguistic and imaginative powers to think of lexical choices made by authors. This exercise will enrich their vocabulary and enable them to appreciate the differences between ordinary language and literary language. In this type of test, the expectable word method should be used. Multiple choice cloze tests can also be used for this purpose. Dictation of literary texts is also one way of improving and testing students' literary competence. Editing tasks can be profitably used in literature testing. This type of test will make students aware of extraordinary lexical choices made by literary authors. Most literature test items are examples of communicative testing. The preceding paragraphs illustrate that recent development in language testing have implications for the field of literature testing.

### **1.13 Some Problems in Testing and Future Possibilities**

There have been radical changes in the field of language testing during the last 50 years and broad views of language and language teaching have expanded the scope of language testing. Canale (1984) remarks, 'Evaluation within a communicative approach must address ... new content areas such as sociolinguistic appropriateness rules, new testing formats to permit and encourage creative, open ended language use, new test

administration procedures to emphasise interpersonal interaction in authentic situations, and new scoring procedures of a manual and judgmental nature' (p.72). Developments in applied linguistic and psychometrics have made us aware of the interdisciplinary nature of language testing. Bachman (1990) comments, 'Meeting these challenges will require innovation and the re-examination of existing assumptions, procedures, and technology' (p.298). He pleads for a 'psychometric-communicative' trend in language testing.

One of the primary concerns in language testing has been to make language tests authentic. The criterion of authenticity gives importance to the use of real-life language and there is an appeal to real-life performance. According to Bachman (1990), authenticity refers to 'the extent to which test performance replicates some specified non-test language performance' (p.301). Real-life communicative use of language is a result of the interaction between the language user, the context and the discourse. There can be direct or indirect tests of proficiency. According to Clark (1975), 'In direct proficiency testing, the testing of format and procedure attempts to duplicate as closely as possible the setting and operation of the real-life situations in which the proficiency is normally demonstrated' (p.10). Clark (1978) observes, 'Indirect measures are not required to reflect authentic language-use context and, indeed, they may in many cases bear little formal resemblance to linguistic situations that the students would encounter in real-life' (p.26). Direct and indirect language tests may be considered to be a continuum.

Researchers in language testing have pointed out some problems with the use of non-test language performance as a criterion for authenticity. We must distinguish between the ability measure and the observation of behaviour. The two must not be identified with each other. Authenticity is a function of the interaction between a student and a task. It is

basically the same as communicative language use. However, there is always an element of artificiality in all language tests and that endangers the element of authenticity. Another pertinent question is whether a given test task measures the same ability in different individuals.

We must not lose sight of the interdisciplinary nature of literature testing. It is not only the knowledge of literature which is tested, but students' psychological, sociological and cultural awareness is also tested. The main reason for this is that literature itself is essentially interdisciplinary, as no field of life is outside the purview of literature. Re-examination of existing procedures and assumptions is as imperative in literature testing as it is in language testing. The issue of authenticity is of vital importance in literature testing. It has been pointed out that literary language is different from ordinary language and obviously, the students' ability to produce literary language cannot be generally tested. This is possible only in courses on creative writing. In tests of creative writing, students are given tasks of writing poems or short stories.

In conventional tests in literature, students are asked to critically evaluate or comment on literary texts and analyse them. This task does not correspond to any task that students are called upon to do in real life. These tests are not replications of non-test language use on the part of students. These are essentially indirect tests. There are also difficulties in identifying students' performance with their literary abilities or skills. In other words, their performance does not necessarily reflect their literary performance. That is why some experts believe that literature tests are by definition inauthentic. However, Widdowson (1978) gives importance to interaction as a part of authenticity and observes, 'Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and

it has to do with appropriate response' (p.80). Bachman (1990) expresses a similar view when he points out, 'Authenticity is ... a function of the interaction between the test taker and the test task' (p.317). It has been suggested that the content of communicative language test should be motivating and interactive. This applies to literature testing as well.

More research needs to be conducted on authenticity and validation of both language and literature testing. There should be a lot of empirical examination including observation and controlled elicitation using a proper qualitative and quantitative procedure. Research and development in testing should address the needs of tests in education in particular and society in general. Bachman (1990) thinks that future research needs to concentrate on development and validation of authentic tests of communicative language ability and the development of criterion-referenced measures of communicative language ability, because norm-referenced tests are not totally satisfactory. Something similar needs to be done in the area of literature testing as well. It is necessary to examine the process and products of both language and literature testing. The present study concentrates on the products of literature testing, i.e. the examination questions based on literature.

Computer administration of language tests provides information on the process of language testing. Bachman (1990) observes, 'The major application of computer technology to language testing has been that of improving the psychometric qualities of test scores and maximizing the efficiency of test administration' (p.336). So far computers have not been used for literature testing. More research needs to be done in this area. It is possible to use computers in integrative literature tests to compile and classify large amounts of data. For example, it is possible to find out how long a student

takes to answer a question, what his first response is, at what point he goes back and edits a part of his answer etc. This would generate hypotheses about how individuals take literature tests.

As far as marking or grading is concerned, criterion-referenced scales with criteria for absolute levels need to be developed. The levels should be defined with reference to the relative presence or absence of abilities or skills, with 'zero' at the bottom and 'perfect' at the top. This would make literature marks or grades more transparent. It is hoped that the future of literature testing will be characterized by a synthesis of different approaches and the application of psychometric theories in the development of literature tests. This would provide us with insight into the study and teaching of literature. There needs to be greater collaboration among all the participants in literature testing--students, teachers, curriculum designers, material producers, publishers and administrators.

#### **1.14 Work Already Done in the Broad Research Area and the Need for More Work**

This study presents an analysis of literature questions set in a few Iraqi and Indian universities during the last 10 years. The broad area is literature testing. However, no full-scale comprehensive study of this type has been made of the testing of literature, particularly at the undergraduate level. No such study is available comparing ESL and EFL contexts illustrated by India and Iraq. Some selected work has been done on the teaching of literature, but practically no work seems to have been done on the testing of literature.



It is obvious from the preceding sections that a lot of significant work is available on language testing. There are a number of books and research works exclusively devoted to language testing and there is no attempt to apply the insights gained from language testing to the unexplored field of literature testing. The narrow area of this study may be said to be ‘testing literature tests’ or ‘questioning literature questions’. Usually there is evaluation of other components of the curriculum except tests. This is probably the first study involving the evaluation of literature tests.

This section reviews the works available in the area of ‘questioning the questions’. It also refers to the work done in this area particularly in Iraq and India. It also takes into account the work available on the teaching of literature in ESL and EFL contexts.

Bhambani (1994) has analysed Class X question papers in English. He specifies different types of questions asked and comments on the performance of students. Ali (1995) has done similar work by analysing test design at the secondary school level and presented his comments on the question papers in English set at the school level.

Gacche’s (2012) dissertation on ‘Evaluation of Grammar Questions at the Undergraduate Level Examinations’ is a significant study in the area of testing the tests. She has analysed grammar questions in 38 question papers of First Year B.A. and B.Com., Second Year B.A. and Third Year B.A. during the years 2000-2010. The grammar questions have been analysed with reference to the weightage of marks, level of difficulty, repetition of test items, possibility of multiple correct answers etc. She also prepared a grammar test of 100 objective questions and administered it to 43 students. An attempt was made to identify the areas of difficulty in grammar for these students. A conjunction is found to be the

most difficult grammar topic for most students. A remarkable feature of this study is that students' answers were checked by 10 different teachers in order to find out whether there is interpersonal variability in the assessment of even the objective questions. There is found to be a marginal variation in the scores of different examiners. It is found that on an average 20% weightage is given to grammar and that the grammar items are characterized by decontextualization, abundant use of grammatical terminology, insufficient instructions and sometimes errors in formulating the test items. It is noted that most of the teachers do not have any formal training in either the teaching or testing of grammar. It is recommended that grammar tests should be contextualized and not be in the form of isolated sentences and that innovative ways of testing grammar should be adopted. The study is an important contribution to the field of language testing.

Rao and Pushpalatha (1995) have assessed the teaching of English language and literature in India. Durant (1986) and (1987) in his series of articles entitled 'English Literature Teaching in India: Background and Case for Curriculum Development' has offered insightful analysis of various issues related to the teaching of English literature in India and has made some comments which have implications for the testing of English literature in India.

It is clear from the foregoing comments that the research area of this study is seen as a virgin field and the absence of a considerable body of previous research work is a 'blessing in disguise', because it allows the researcher to carry out her work objectively and without any prejudice. Undoubtedly, a lot of research work needs to be done in the research area.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **AIMS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **2.1 The Raison d'être of the Present Study**

Chapter I indicates that in the area of testing, much attention has been paid to language testing and that the testing of literature has generally been neglected. This section brings out how the present study is different from the studies reviewed in chapter I and specifies its *raison d'être*.

1. Most studies of testing have concentrated on language testing and paid scant attention to literature testing. Studies like Bhambani (1994) and Ali (1993) have studied design of language tests at the secondary level. No full-scale comprehensive study has been made of the testing of literature, particularly at the undergraduate level.

2. No exclusive study of the testing of English literature seems to have been undertaken so far. In Durant (1986) and (1987), there is an insightful analysis of various issues related to the teaching of English literature in India, but there are only a few comments which have implications for the testing of English literature in India.

3. Since very few studies of the testing of literature are available, there have been practically no studies comparing the testing of literature in two diverse contexts. This probably is the first study to compare the testing of literature in Iraq and India. This is significant because the status and roles of English in the two countries are widely different. In Iraq English is a foreign language, whereas it is a second language in India. In Iraq, the use of English is restricted to very few contexts, whereas in India, it is used in

multiple contexts and a large number of well-known creative writers write in English and use English as the vehicle of literary expression. Interestingly, some of them are monolingual writers and they write only in English and not in their first language. It is expected that such a comparison would yield interesting results.

4. A special feature of this study is that it is based on an analysis of a number of question papers of undergraduate classes in Iraq and India. The study analyses the questions using different criteria. Probably no such study has been undertaken so far.

5. Since not much work has been done in this area, it is seen as a virgin field. The absence of previous research work similar to the proposed one is seen as a 'blessing in disguise', because it allows the researcher to carry out her work objectively and with some amount of originality.

## **2.2 The Aims of the Study**

The aims of the present study are to critically examine the questions intended to test the students' knowledge and understanding of literature at the undergraduate level in Iraq and India. The following are the specific aims of the study.

i) To critically analyse and classify the questions based on literature at the undergraduate level in Iraq and India to find out whether the questions set are reliable, valid and unambiguous

ii) To assess whether questions asked successfully test students' literary competence

iii) To identify whether any inappropriate words or phrases or any ungrammatical constructions are used in the questions

iv) To analyse the problems in marking students' answers

v) To elicit from teachers and students their reactions to the patterns of literature testing and get their suggestions for qualitative improvement of the questions for testing literature

vi) To suggest innovative and more efficient types of questions on literature and elicit reactions to those questions from both students and teachers. The aims stated above are interdependent and interrelated

### **2.3 The Approach Followed in this Study**

It has been pointed out earlier that this is probably the first full-scale study of the questions designed to test literature at the undergraduate level in Iraq and India. Since there is no precedent for this kind of study, the researcher had to develop her approach independently. Most of the principles followed in this study are taken from similar studies intended to study language testing at different levels. The approach followed in this study is essentially eclectic and integrative.

### **2.4 The Data for the Present Study**

The data used for the present study mainly consist of the questions based on literature from the question papers of five universities each in Iraq and India. All these question papers relate to the testing of literature at the undergraduate level. The five universities from Iraq and India selected for this study are considered to be representative of the universities in these two countries. Since India is a vast country, the five Indian universities selected belong to one particular region, viz, the Western region. The five

universities also represent different provinces or states in the two countries. The five universities from Iraq are University of Baghdad, Diyala University, University of Salahaddin, Tikrit University and University of Basrah. The five universities from India are The University of Pune; The University of Rajasthan, Jaipur; Sardar Patel University, Anand; Shivaji University, Kolhapur and Bharati Vidyapeeth University. The question papers of the last ten years have been collected from these universities. All these questions have been analysed using different criteria specified below.

Reactions of students and practising teachers from the two countries to these questions are collected using questionnaires and also through interviews.

## **2.5 The Analytical Procedure**

Most of the generalizations made in this study are primarily based on the analysis of the question papers from the five universities in Iraq and India. This is done using different criteria. The criteria are explained below.

### **a) The Structure of Questions**

It has been found that questions on literature are worded differently. Sometimes they have the structure of an imperative sentence and sometimes that of an interrogative sentence. The interrogative sentence may be a polarity question or an information- seeking question. Sometimes in the same question, there are many imperative or interrogative sentences. The number of such clauses and sentences has also been noted.

## **b) The Types of Questions**

Each question has been analysed into one of the three main types-- objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions. Initially, a distinction was made only between objective and descriptive questions. In an objective question, the answer expected is very short and it may be given in the form of a single word, phrase or sentence and in most cases, there is one and only one correct answer. There is uniformity in the assessment of such questions and in some cases even a computer can assess these answers. A descriptive question, on the other hand, does not have one and only one correct answer. The answer reflects the student's individual way of reacting to literary texts and his sensitivity and mode of thinking. The assessment of such an answer is often impressionistic and there is a lot of intra-personal and interpersonal variability among the examiners.

In this study, however, instead of making a polar distinction between objective questions and descriptive questions, a three-way distinction has been made-- objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions. Short answer questions are the intermediate step between objective questions and essay type questions. Obviously, short answer questions do not have as short answers as objective questions and as long answers as essay type questions. They share the features of both the types of questions. They do not have answers in single words, phrases or sentences. They are answered in two or three sentences. There is no one 'standardized' correct answer and there is some scope for variation in the phrasing of the correct answer and there is also a limited scope for individual expression. Of course, it does not give as much scope to individual expression as an essay type question.

Usually an objective test item has only one or two marks, a typical essay type question has marks between 12 and 20, while a short answer question typically has marks between 2 and 10. The expected length of the answer also varies from one type of question to another. It needs to be pointed out that there are different conventions regarding the length of the answer to questions based on literature. In Iraq, the answer to a literature question is much shorter than in India. A typical short answer question is expected to be answered in 20-100 words in Iraq, whereas in India, it is expected to be answered in 40-240 words. A typical essay type question is answered in Iraq in 150-250 words, whereas in India, the expected length is 300-800 words.

Whether a question is classified as a short answer question or essay type question does not depend exclusively on any of the factors mentioned above, but a combination of all the factors. The boundary line between objective questions and short answer questions is sometimes very thin and problematic.

### **c) Key Words**

Every question has one or more key words. These words are question words like 'how', 'which', 'why' and 'what'. There may be imperative verbs like 'discuss', 'analyse', 'give', 'illustrate' and 'consider'. There may be other important words like 'critically', 'views', 'development' and 'character sketch'. All such words have a significant function in the framing and understanding of a question. Students are required to pay close attention to them, but they are often neglected by students. These words play a significant role in interpreting the question and defining its scope. In the analysis of the questions made for this study, key words in every question have been noted.



#### **d) What is being Tested?**

Different literature- based questions test different abilities on the part of students and it was thought necessary to analyse each question from this point of view. In the study of literature, an obligatory factor is a very close, careful and sensitive study of the text. Many students, however, do not fulfil this basic condition in their study of literature and depend entirely on ready- made notes and answers. The study of texts is a prerequisite in the study of literature and no analysis of literature can be made without this. However, the term 'close study of the text' is used in analysis made for this study only when a student is presented a literary extract in the question paper and he is expected to read it carefully in the examination hall, interpret it and answer questions based on it. In other cases, this term has not been used.

Sometimes a quotation is given in the question. The quotation may be from the prescribed literary text or from its criticism. In such cases, the student's ability to comprehend the question or critical remark is involved in answering the question. The term 'comprehension' is used in the analysis to refer to this ability. If the student is unable to comprehend the quotation or remark, he is not in a position to give a relevant response to the question.

Sometimes a question uses literary or critical terms and asks students to apply those concepts to a particular literary text or extract reproduced in the question paper. In such cases, the term 'application' has been used in the analysis. This emphasizes the fact that merely having knowledge of literary terminology is not enough and that a student must be able to analyse a text in the light of particular terms.

Of course, the ability of thinking is very important in answering any question on any subject. However, the term 'thinking' has been used in this analysis only when a student is required to think about the acceptability of a statement. It has also been used when a student is asked whether he agrees or disagrees with some one's view or statement. In addition, it has been used when a student is asked to justify his point of view. All such questions involve a student's ability to think independently and critically and his potential for originality.

Many questions require an individual response from students. In the study of literature, a student's perception and sensitivity are important and need to be tested. Each student of literature is different from all other students and the answer must reflect his unique mental processes. Sometimes in such a question, there is an attempt to relate a literary text to a student's personal life and a student is asked for his personal opinion. The term 'personal response' has been used in the analysis presented in this study to refer to such questions.

A large number of questions both in Iraq and India involve a student's ability to remember various details about literature and literary texts. These details may relate to an author's life and his achievements, social, political and cultural background of the times in which a literary work is produced; the themes and sub-themes; plot construction; characterization; symbolism; imagery etc. Of course, a student is able to give all these details efficiently if he has read the text closely and carefully and remembers the relevant details. The term 'memory' has been used in the analysis presented in this study to refer to the ability involved in answering such questions. But it is a commonly observed fact both in Iraq and India that such questions are answered even if the student has no acquaintance with the text at all. It is possible to answer such questions without studying

the text because such questions are highly predictable and they are repeated from one year to another. The answers to such questions are available in the notes dictated by teachers and in the bazaar notes which often contain errors and are not written by qualified teachers. Most students learn them by heart and reproduce them in the answer book, often without reading the questions carefully. From the answer, it is sometimes difficult to judge whether the student has read the original text or not.

Analysis of what is being tested is intended to help the researcher to discover whether questions based on literature really test the student's literary competence and whether they are reliable and valid.

#### **e) The Expected Length of Answers**

For each question in the analysis, the expected length of the answer is also noted. This is specified on the basis of the researcher's experience and observation of the teaching-learning situation in universities in Iraq and India. This has also enabled the researcher to distinguish among objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions. It has been found that in Iraq, relatively shorter answers are expected, but in India, very long answers are the norm.

#### **f) Marks Allotted to Questions**

For a student, the marks allotted to questions are significant because they often indicate the types of questions and the expected length of the answers. Marks need to be explicitly stated in the question paper and the student should also know in advance how many marks are allotted to each sub-question. It has been noticed that sometimes there are two

or three sub-questions within a question and the marks are globally indicated for the entire question. In such cases, the sub-questions may not be comparable to each other and there is a feeling that each sub-question deserves different marks. Some questions are sometimes allotted fractional marks and this may create a difficulty for students and teachers. In some questions, marks are not indicated at all and this poses a serious problem for the students. In this analysis, attention has been paid to the number of marks allotted to each question, because it is thought that marks constitute a necessary and inalienable part of the question.

## **2.6 The Descriptive Procedure**

1) Chapters III and IV present an analysis of the questions found in question papers at the undergraduate level in five selected universities in Iraq and India respectively. Chapter V offers a comparison of the trends of setting questions on literature in the two countries and identifies similarities and differences between the two contexts. It also offers suggestions for setting of questions and explores the possibilities of innovative and more reliable and valid questions in the two countries. Chapter VI briefly presents the conclusions of the study and makes recommendations for teachers and paper- setters in the two countries.

2) A part of the data collected from question papers, on which the generalizations presented in this study are primarily based, are given in the appendix. However, it has not been possible to reproduce the entire data owing to their size. The entire data from one university in each of the two countries have been given in the appendix. Each sample of

analysis specifies the question number, the structure of questions, the types of questions, the key words and what is being tested.

3) All the questions in the data are numbered for ease of reference. Firstly, each university in Iraq and India is given a number. For example, the University of Diyala is assigned number 1, and the University of Pune is assigned number 10. All these numbers are specified in the appendix. Each question paper from each university is assigned a number and each question in each question paper is also assigned a number. For example, 1.2.1 as a question number indicates University of Diyala, question paper in drama (No.2) for the third year final examination (2006-2007) and question number 1 in this question paper, viz. 'Comment on Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' as a revenge tragedy'. Number 7.5.3 indicates Sardar Patel University, paper II (prose) in English literature for F.Y.B.A examination 2007 and question number in the question paper, viz. 'The common things of life, which everyone's reach are more valuable than riches'. Comment on the statement with reference to King Midas' character.

4) An attempt has been made in this study to make a statistical analysis of the structure of questions, the types of questions, key words and what is being tested. The occurrences of each type have been calculated for each university separately and for all universities together either in Iraq or in India. This has made generalizations about each university possible and this reflects the prevailing dominant tendencies in each university. This has also facilitated generalizations about universities in Iraq and India.

5) One of the purposes of the study has been to elicit reactions of teachers and students to the questions asked in the question papers both in Iraq and India. Questionnaires have

been prepared for both teachers and students. These informant reaction tests provide valuable feedback about questions actually asked and some of the innovative questions proposed. The questionnaires are reproduced in the appendix.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE TESTING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN IRAQ**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The use of English in Iraq has been growing steadily over the last few decades. English has been taught in Iraq for less than a century. This started around the early 1921s. It would be interesting to trace the origins and history of teaching and testing of English literature in Iraq and understand the present system of teaching and testing of literature in Iraq in the light of historical factors. However, this is outside the scope of the present study.

Around 1957, Iraq had only one university-- Baghdad University. Essentially, English was taught only in medical and engineering colleges. Gradually, it started being taught in other faculties of the university. At present, there are about 25 universities in Iraq and these are located in all the major towns of Iraq. Each university has different departments and some universities have also colleges of languages. In universities, the department of English is a part of the College of Education. There are no affiliated colleges in any university and English is taught only in one college in each university.

This study makes analysis of question papers of literature from five selected universities in Iraq. Such a study is potentially rewarding because it would indicate a lot about the aims and objectives of teaching literature in Iraq, curriculum design, methods and techniques of teaching literature and finally about the testing of literature and assessment of students' performance.

It has been observed that even if students do well in literature examinations, their marks do not faithfully reflect their literary competence. It is hoped that this study will bring about some positive changes in the teaching and testing of English literature in Iraq.

Most question papers in Iraq universities mention the examiner's name and in some cases even the name of the Chairman of the Department. The examiner is the same as the teacher of the course. It is remarkable that in some cases, the question paper also wishes good luck to students and extends to them good wishes. This seems to be an interesting mix of formal and informal styles, because the rest of the question paper is in the formal style.

The following section present an analysis of the question papers from five Iraqi universities using certain criteria. Section 3.7 offers generalizations regarding the testing of literature in Iraq.

## **3.2 University of Baghdad**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

The University of Baghdad is probably the oldest and most renowned university in Iraq. A number of international students study at this university. It was established in 1957 and since then it has made a remarkable academic progress. The College of Arts in this university has the Department of English and even the College of Education has it is own department of English.



### **3.2.2 The Types of Questions**

It is noticed that the question papers of this university have all the three types of questions-- essay type, short answer and objective. A majority of questions set in this university are essay type questions and expect fairly long answers. The percentage of such questions in the data is 65.60. Some of the question papers have only essay type questions and do not contain any other types of questions. For example,-

Describe the character of Malvolio with reference to the content of the letter and Malvolio's punishment. (1/3/4)

Each one of us wants to climb up the social ladder except Sir Thomas Wyatt who wants to go down from this ladder. Discuss this statement in regard to Wyatt's "Stand who so list". (1/10/1)

Give a critical appreciation of Robert Herrick's poem "To Daffodils", pointing out the main features of the Cavalier school, and examine the poem in the light of concept summed up by the Latin expression "Carpe Diem". (1/14/5)

There are also short answer questions in the data and sometimes they contain specific instructions about the brevity of the expected answers. The percentage of such questions in the data is 29.29. The following are illustrations of short answer questions.

Comment briefly on the role played by Maria in Twelfth Night. (1/1/7)

Write a short paragraph on satire. (1/20/9)

Write down a very brief note on the art professor. (1/6/14)

In some questions students are given passages from the texts and they are asked specific questions about them. All these are short answer questions. For example,

Identify, comment and give the dramatic value of the following extracts. (1/1/1)

Identify and comment on the following speeches. (1/5/2)

Identify, explain and comment on the following. (1/12/1)

There are very few objective questions asked in this university. Most of them ask for definitions of literary terms. For example,

Define 'Contrast'. (1/8/2)

The following are other examples of objective questions.

Name two poems where two different poets handle the theme of rejected love. (1/19/6)

Name the poet who, like Jonson, cared for structure and formal compactness. (1/20/6)

It is noticed that in this university the distinction between short answer questions and objective questions is not maintained meticulously. The two questions mentioned above (1/19/6 and 1/20/6) are both objective questions in form, but both of them carry the instruction 'Answer the following briefly' and the other questions asked under the same rubric are certainly short answer questions.

It is interesting to note that a part of some short answer questions is objective. For example,

Explain the following extract showing the name of the poet and the title of the poem from which it is taken. (1/8/1)

In this question, asking the students to specify the poet's name and the title of the poem is an objective question, but asking for the explanation of the extract is a short answer question.

### **3.2.3 The Structure of Questions**

It is found that a majority of questions set in this university are in the form of imperative sentences and there are fewer interrogative sentences. The percentage of imperatives in the data is 55.41. For example,

Choose any three outstanding scenes from Sons and Lovers and comment on the thematic and stylistic qualities which make these scenes memorable for you. (1/9/4)

Comment on William Wordsworth as a Romantic poet, giving examples from the poems you read. (1/15/4)

The following question consists of the pattern 'Declarative + Imperative'. This is the most frequent combination in the data.

In Hard Times and The Scarlet letter, the marriage of old men to very young women is doomed to failure. Discuss with examples from both novels. (1/5/4)

The literary extract given for analysis is usually preceded by imperative sentences. For example,

Identify and comment on the following extract. (1/9/1)

As mentioned earlier, there are very few interrogatives used in this university. For example,

What are the contents of the message that Faustus wants Mephistopheles to deliver to Lucifer? (1/11/9)

What is the importance of the idea of blood which is mentioned several times in the play Dr. Faustus? (1/1/2)

How many times did Vera lie in 'The Open Window'? (1/6/7)

How does Wordsworth glorify the beauty of nature in his poem 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'? (1/8/6)

The following test item consists of four interrogative sentences.

Who said it? To whom? When? Where? (1/16/1)

The following test item consists of the pattern 'Declarative + Interrogative + Interrogative + Interrogative + Imperative.

Paradise Lost is a poem written by John Milton. What is its form? How many Books does it consist of? What is its subject matter? Write down at least five lines to be taken from its first Book. (1/14/7)

### **3.2.4 The Key Words**

It has been pointed out above that the most frequent structure of questions in the data is imperative sentences. The most frequent command word used in the data is 'comment'.

The percentage of its occurrence in the data is 61.56. For example,

Comment briefly on the appearance of Lucifer by himself to Faustus. (1/1/6)

Comment on the dramatic significance of the play-within-the play in Hamlet. (1/3/1)

The other frequently used command words in the order of frequency are ‘discuss’, ‘identify’, ‘explain’, ‘define’, ‘give examples’ and ‘give a critical appreciation’. For example,

Sons and Lovers is a novel about the battle between flesh and spirit. Discuss. (1/9/3)

Identify and comment on the following extracts:

“But one day you’ll... you can’t pull of”. (1/9/2)

Explain what happened to Faustus in Rome and what is the dramatic significance of the scene of Faustus with the Pope. (1/2/4)

The most frequent question word used in the data is ‘what’. The frequency of its occurrence is 14.01. For example,

What is the function of the good and evil angels? Show how their role is completed by the appearance of the old man. (1/2/2)

The other question words used in the data in the order of frequency are ‘why’, ‘how’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘who’. For example,

“The King died and the queen died”. Why does not this statement make a plot? (1/6/4)

How is personification used in the “The Sick Rose”? (1/8/8)

What is meant by Homo, fuge? Where and when does it appear? (1/11/7)

### **3.2.5 What is Being Tested?**

It is found that all the questions in the data are based on memory at least to some extent. Some questions involve memory of specific and narrow details about literary texts. Many objective questions and some short answer questions expect this ability on the part of students. For example,

What are the contents of the message that Faustus wants Mephistophilis to deliver to Lucifer? (1/11/9)

Who is Helen? Why does she appear twice on the stage? How much of a role does she play in Faustus' damnation? (1/14/2)

Some of the questions expect students to remember broad aspects of literary texts like themes, plot structure, characterization and style. For example,

What is the problem of the speaker in George Herbert's poem "The Collar"? How does he present the poem? What kind of images has he used in it? (1/14/8)

Give a critical appreciation of "Kubla Khan" (1/15/5)

In the data there are a large number of questions which make students think critically. The frequency of occurrence of such questions in the data is 47.13. For example,

Point out how Byron manages to create images of beauty out of the use of the images of darkness and light in his poem "She Walks in Beauty". (1/15/3)

Describe the character of Malvolio with reference to the content of the letter and Malvolio's punishment. (1/3/4)

Many questions involve comprehension of the statement made or the given literary extracts. Sometimes there are specific questions based on the extracts. For example,

Identify, explain and comment on the following. (1/13/1)

Almost all poets have dealt with the idea of death, each presenting his/her distinct treatment and attitudes towards it. Discuss this statement in relation to John Donne's poem "Death" or any other poem you studied. (1/14/1)

Incidentally, this question offers a free choice of the text to students. Some of the questions are based on a very close and careful study of the texts and they assume the students' first-hand acquaintance with the text. It has been suggested above that objective questions expecting students to remember minute details of the texts and questions asking students to analyse and comment on the given literary extracts belong to this type. Examples of such questions have been given above.

Some questions require the students' personal response. For example,

Explain the extract from your point of view. (1/16/4)

What is the philosophy of hell according to Faustus, Mephosliphilis (sic) and you?  
(1/13/4)

The last question given above tests the student's personal response. However, there are very few personal response questions in the data.

### **3.2.6 Concluding Remarks**

As pointed out above, most of the questions in the question papers in this university are essay type questions and there are very few objective questions. Due to this, the number of the questions in some question papers is very small. Some question papers are found to have only imperative sentences as testing items. Some of the question papers do not mention marks allotted to either individual questions or the question paper as a whole. Many of the question papers wish students good luck. There are a few errors of lexical choice, grammar, spelling and punctuation in some of the questions. Some of these errors have been pointed out in the examples given above. It is necessary that questions are free from all kinds of errors.

## **3.3 Diyala University**

### **3.3.1 Introduction**

Diyala University is one of the youngest universities in Iraq and it was established in 1999. Earlier, it was a part of Almustansria University. It has made considerable academic progress during the short span of 15 years. In this university the Department of English is a part of the College of Education.

### **3.3.2 The Types of Questions**

In this university, all the three types of questions-- objective, short answer and essay type-- have been asked. A special feature of the questions set in this university is that the number of essay type questions and short answer questions in the data are exactly the same. The percentage of occurrence of each of the two types of questions is 41.17. This



suggests that this university gives equal weight to essay type questions and short answer questions.

Essay type questions test the student's ability to write a reasonably long and coherent discourse on a given topic. The following are some examples of essay type questions asked in this university.

In John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud", what did the poet discuss in the first stanza, and how did he give his conclusion? (2/9/5)

In a short essay, discuss the contrast between "The Lamb" and "Tyger". (2/1/8)

Write an essay showing the main characteristics of Old English poetry with reference to Beowulf and any other poems. (2/4/3)

In "Shall I compare thee..." and "Not marble...", Shakespeare wanted to immortalize the person he loved. How? (2/7/6)

Short answer questions test the student's ability to write precise and concise answers. Sometimes the rubric for such questions used is 'Answer the following briefly'. For example,

The Symbols used in *Riders to the Sea*. (2/14/3)

What is the influence of Chaucer in (sic) English language? (2/4/5)

Briefly, give the intention of the poem "To Daffodils". (2/7/2)

Students are also given literary extracts and there are questions based on them. The following is one such question based on a passage.

How does the poet show there is a great deal of variety in life? (2/3/9)

There are only few objective questions asked in this university. Some of them are based on literary extracts reproduced in the question papers. The following two are such questions based on passages.

Who is the poet? (2/3/2)

Whom does the poet talk about? (2/7/4)

The following exemplifies a question asking for a definition.

Define Catharsis (2/4/1)

### **3.3.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of questions in this university are in the form of Imperative sentences. Their percentage in the data is 56.61. For example,

Discuss the theme (sic) “The World Is Too Much with Us” by William Wordsworth.  
(2/18/1)

Give the general and detailed meaning and the poet’s intention of Coleridge’s (sic) *The Ancient Mariner*. (2/3/7)

Comment on Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’ as a revenge tragedy. (2/2/1)

It is noticed that in the question papers 2/2, 2/5, 2/14 and 2/12 all the questions are in the form of imperatives.

Many questions in the question papers are in the form of Interrogative sentences as well.

Their percentage in the data is 25.73. For example,

What are the main characteristics of short story? (2/17/5)

How can you explain the pagan theme in *The Return to the Native*. (sic) (2/8/7)

Who chained and bowed him? (2/1/3)

There are many variations on the two basic patterns. They are Interrogative + Interrogative, Declarative + Imperative, Interrogative + Imperative, Imperative + Interrogative, Declarative + Interrogative and Declarative + Interrogative + Interrogative + Interrogative. The following examples illustrate these patterns.

In "Lucy poem", Wordsworth fell passionately in love with Lucy. What does Lucy represent? Where does she live? And why has the poet fallen in love with her? (2/1/6)

What illustrations does Shakespeare use in "Winter" to make us feel that the weather is cold? How does he contrast cold and warmth? (2/3/8)

Hamlet's madness is viewed differently. Discuss. (2/2/2)

What is narrative poetry? Define with reference to "Lord Randal". (2/3/6)

### **3.3.4 The Key Words**

The most frequent wh- question word in the data is 'what'. Its percentage in the data is 25. For example,

What are the poet's feelings about death? (2/3/10)

What themes do you suggest for Lawrence's 'Sons and Lovers'? (2/8/4)

Other frequently used question words in the data are 'who', 'how' and 'why'. For example,

How can you explain the pagan theme in *The Return of the Native*. (sic) (2/8/7)

Who is the poet? (1/1/3)

What does he ask the wind to do? Why? (2/1/4)

The most frequently used command word in the data is 'discuss'. Its percentage in the data is 13.97. For example,

Discuss 'Queen of Night' in *The Return of the Native*. (2/8/8)

Discuss the significance of Hamlet's first soliloquy. (2/2/4)

The other frequently used command words are 'comment', 'define', 'write an essay', 'explain' and 'identify'. For example,

Identify and comment on:

It is given out...

Now wears his crown. (2/2/5)

Write an essay showing the influence of Seneca on the Elizabethan dramatists with reference to *Gorboduc*. (2/4/7)

Define William Langland. (2/4/1)

### **3.3.5 What is being Tested?**

It is found that all the questions asked in this university expect students to use their memory in answering the questions. Students with bad memory would find it difficult to identify the source of the passages given and to remember minute textual details. For example,

What are the types of Old English Drama? Discuss. (2/4/6)

Discuss the significance of Hamlet's first soliloquy. (2/2/4)

What is the influence of Chaucer in (sic) English language? (1/4/5)

Some of the questions also require the students to think on their own and present an analysis. Their percentage in the data is 56.4. For example,

Analyze critically Happy's character. (2/5/6)

Briefly, give the intention of "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love". (2/7/2)

In a short essay, discuss the contrast between "The Lamb" and "The Tyger". (2/1/8)

In some questions extracts from texts are reproduced and questions are based on them. Similarly, some questions contain quotations or critical statements. The faculty involved in answering these questions in addition to other faculties is comprehension. For example,

Read the following lines carefully, then answer the questions below.

Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud; ...

Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth! (2/1/2)

Arthur Miller's *Death of Salesman* presents the paradox of failure in the land of success.

Discuss. (2/5/1)

"She exults- exults as she carries him from me ... she is not like ordinary woman, who can leave me my share with him. She wants to absorb him till there is nothing left of him. She will suck him up". In light of Mr. Morel's above commentary on Miriam, discuss the central conflict between Miriam and Mrs. Morel (for possession of Paul). (2/8/3)

Questions asking students to identify the given passages and questions involving minute textual details are also based on a close and careful study of the text. For example,

Discuss the significance of Hamlet's first soliloquy. (2/2/4)

What illustrations does Shakespeare use in 'Winter' to make us feel that the weather is cold? How does he contrast cold and warmth? (2/3/8)

Very few questions in the data are personal response questions. For example,

What themes do you suggest for Lawrence's "'Sons and Lovers'"? (2/8/4)

How can you explain the pagan theme in "'The Return of the Native'"? (2/8/7)

### **3.3.6 Concluding Comments**

It has been pointed out above that there are only few objective questions in the data from this university. Some of the questions are partly short answer questions, but they are intended to be essay type questions. For example, (2/8/4) and (2/8/7)

It has been noticed that some of the questions contain errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Some of these errors have been pointed out above. Care must be taken to

ensure that all the questions are in correct English. One of the wrong questions asked is 2/4/1 cited above. It must be pointed out that it is possible to define concepts and technique terms, but not authors. Question 2/11/6 in the data is ‘Who is the name of the poet?’ There seems to be a mix-up between two possible questions ‘Who is the poet?’ and ‘What is the name of the poet?’. Such errors need to be avoided. As mentioned above, the most remarkable feature of this university is the equal number of essay type and short answer questions in the data.

### **3.4 University of Salahaddin**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

The University of Salahaddin is located in the city of Erbil in the north of Iraq and it was established in 1981. It is one of the well- known universities in Iraq and it has a good reputation for its academic standard.

#### **3.4.2 The Types of Questions**

In this university, all the three types of questions-- objective, short answer and essay type- have been asked to test literature. However, one feature needs to be highlighted. In general, the answers to all the questions are expected to be much shorter than in other contexts. In one of the question papers, there is a note printed in bold type-’The Answers Should be **BRIEF** and **PRECISE**’ (3/3). This note is also valid for all other question papers, even if it is not overtly stated. In one of the question papers even the time limit (i.e. the time that students should spend on answering each question) has been mentioned.

A majority of questions asked in this university are essay type questions. Their percentage in the data is 54.05. Most of these questions have been assigned marks ranging between 10 and 20. In some cases the expected length of the answer is also specified. It ranges between 120 and 160 words. The following are some examples of essay type questions asked in this university.

Mysticism occupies a big space in Victorian Poetry. Illustrate with examples from at least TWO poets. (3/3/5)

Comment on Joyce's attitude towards the Irish educational system as shown through Stephen's school experience. (3/7/4)

Giving special attention to Wickham, Charlotte Lucas, and Elizabeth, compare and contrast male and female attitudes toward marriage in the novel. (3/13/3)

The percentage of short answer questions in the data is 43.24. The marks assigned to such questions are less than 10 and the expected length of the answer is between 40 and 100 words. The following are some examples of short answer questions.

Mention three major differences between Comedy and Tragedy. (3/1/4)

Draw a brief character sketch of Simon Dedalus. (3/7/6)

In some questions, literary extracts are given and students are asked to identify and explain specific aspects of the texts. These are also short answer questions. For example,

Discuss the significance of the figure of speech in the two following (sic) passages.

Caesar, thou art revenged,



Even with the sword that killed thee.

Caesar, now be still:

I killed thee not with half so good a will. (3/2/4)

How does the following passage reflect the character of the speaker?

And Dream'd you this? Or,

Did invent the Story?

To frighten our Egyptian Boys withal

And train them betimes in fear of priesthood? (3/2/6)

There are very few objective questions in these question papers. It is noticed that in all the objective questions, short extracts from the text are given and questions relate to them.

For example,

State to whom and by whom the following are spoken.

“And the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude”. (3/1/1)

Identify each of the following, and then state what/ who is meant by the underlined words:

Touch not these poisn'd Gifts

Infected by the sender, touch'em not (3/2/5)

It is interesting to note that each of these objective questions has 4 or 5 marks. In one of the questions, the first half consists of an objective question and the second half is really a short answer question.

In no more than two sentences for each, identify the figures of speech in the following extracts and explain the meaning of the speeches in your own words.

“But I am shepherd to another man,

And do not shear the fleeces that I graze”. (3/1/2)

Even if the explanation is expected to be in only one sentence, it is difficult to answer this in one sentence and students are likely to write two or three sentences. Moreover, the answer is not totally fixed and predictable. Therefore, the second half is more of a short answer question rather than an objective question.

### **3.4.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of questions in this university are worded as Imperative sentences. Their percentage in the data is 48.64. In some question papers, all the questions asked are in the form of imperative sentences. For example,

Discuss the portrayal of women in Ben Jonson’s classic comedy, *Volpone*. (3/12/3)

Identify and then discuss the significance of reference to all the five senses in the first two pages of the novel. (3/9/2)

Explain the battle of Cowshed in “The Animal Farm”. (3/4/4)

A few questions in the data are in the form of Interrogative sentences. For example,

What is absurdum, and how does *The Importance of Being Earnest* qualify as the theatre of absurd? (3/12/5)

What is the only thing that Lemuel Gulliver admired in Lilliput? (3/6/4)

It is remarkable that the following question consists of three interrogatives followed by an imperative.

In what sense could one possibly admire the tricksters Mosca and Volpone? Who is more victorious and humorous, Volpone or Mosca? Why? Discuss. (3/12/2)

There are also variations on the basic pattern pointed out above. A common variation consists of the pattern Declarative + Interrogative. For example,

All the themes of *Gulliver's Travels* resolved (sic) into one theme. What is that theme? (3/6/2)

The other variations consist of the patterns Interrogative + Interrogative, Declarative + Interrogative + Imperative, Interrogative + Imperative + Interrogative and Imperative + Interrogative. The following are some examples illustrating these patterns.

Mysticism occupies a big space in Victorian Poetry. Illustrate with examples from at least TWO poets. (3/3/5)

Why or how is *The Importance of Being Earnest* humorous and funny? Analyze some aspects of Wildean wit. Is there a difference between being "witty" and being "funny"? (3/11/4)

Volpone has many subplots, what are they? Discuss them and show their contribution to the play. (3/11/1)

### **3.4.4 The Key Words**

The most frequent wh- question word in the data is 'what'. Its percentage in the data is 20.27. The following questions illustrate this pattern.

What was Lemuel Gulliver (sic) advice to the king of Brobdingnag? And what did the king finally conclude? (3/6/6)

What is the role of the mirror in *The Scarlet Letter*? (3/6/9)

The most frequent imperative expression in the data is 'discuss'. Its percentage in the data is 18.91. The following questions illustrate this pattern.

Discuss the portrayal of women in *Moll Flanders* by Danial (sic) Defoe. (3/10/1)

Lord Henry and the yellow book lead to Dorian's downfall. Discuss. (3/8/3)

The other question words used in the data in the order of frequency are 'how', 'why', 'who' and 'which'. The following are some examples of questions beginning with these question words.

Why or how is *The Importance of Being Earnest* humorous and funny? Analyze some aspects.... (3/11/4)

How does *The Scarlet Letter* consider (sic) to be the product of both Puritan Heritage and a free- thinking man at the same time? (3/6/7)

In what sense...? Who is more victorious and humorous, Volpone or Mosca...? (3/12/2)

The other most frequent command words in the order of frequency are 'explain', 'identify', 'illustrate', 'mention', 'comment' etc. The following questions illustrate this pattern.

Explain the battle of the Cowshed in "Animal Farm". (3/4/4)

Identify the main SYMBOLS used in "The Animal Farm". (3/4/6)

Illustrate the significance of the following quotation:

"Nothing stirred... (3/9/1)

Mention two main advantages of having a fool in comedy. (3/1/5)

### **3.4.5 What is being Tested?**

It is noticed that memory plays a crucial role in answering all the questions in the question papers of this university. The following questions are examples of such questions.

Modern poets have different responses to war. Write about this phenomenon with close reference to THREE poems you have studied. (3/3/4)

Draw a brief character sketch of Napoleon. (3/7/8)

Identify, analyze, give the meaning and the significance of the underlined words and point out the figures of speech in the following extracts. (3/3/2)

Some questions expect the students to think about something and substantiate what they write in the answer. For example,

Discuss the significance of the figure of speech in the following passage. (3/2/4)

How does the following passage reflect the character of the speaker? (3/2/6)

Comment on Joyce's attitude towards the Irish educational system as shown through Stephen's school experience. (3/7/4)

The percentage of such questions in the data is 39.18.

There are also questions based on comprehension of literary extracts reproduced in the question paper and statements made. For example,

Illustrate the significance of the following quotations:

“The swift December dusk... (3/7/1)

Speaking to Louisa, Gradgrind says "some persons hold, he pursued, still hesitating, that there is a wisdom of the Head and that there is a wisdom of the Heart. I have not supposed so; but, as I have said, I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient". Discuss. (3/8/1)

The preface to *Moll Flanders* maintains that the book was written as a moral tale that should instruct people. What is the moral lesson of this novel? (3/10/2)

The percentage of such questions in the data is 35.13.

Some questions are based on a close study of the text. They are based on minute details of the texts or sections of literary texts that students would not generally pay much attention to. For example,

To which of the voices does Stephen respond at the end of the novel? Explain briefly.

(3/7/3)

Jane Austen satirizes snobs (social climbers) in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Giving special consideration to Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins, argue and defend one side of this issue. (3/10/3)

The first half of this question is based on a close study of the text, because students are expected to comment on all the snobs in the novel including minor characters.

There are some questions which involve the application of some concept or idea to the given extract. This is similar to analysis of a passage from a particular point of view. For example,

In no more... identify the figure of speech in the following extracts and... (3/1/2)

Identify the main SYMBOLS used in ''The Animal Farm''. (3/4/6)

In the data there is only one question asking for students' personal responses.

Think about the functions... why are they necessary? (In each case, what would be lacking if he/ she were not in the novel?) (3/10/4)

The last part of this question evokes a personal response; because it asks students to imagine what would happen if certain characters were not in the novel.

### **3.4.6 Concluding Comments**

It has been pointed out above that there are hardly any objective questions on literature in this university and most of the questions are either essay type questions or short answer questions. It is noticeable that all the objective questions appear in only one question paper. It has been noticed that occasionally there are grammatical mistakes in the framing of questions (e.g. 3/6/7 and 3/6/2 cited above).

Some of the questions are too vague and general, because they offer too wide a choice to students. For example,

Write a short essay on the THREE GENIUSES of English literature. Provide examples when necessary. (3/5/6)

In question (3/4/6) cited above, asking students to identify the symbols in "The Animal Farm", it would have been ideal to give a passage from the text. This would reduce the element of memory and make it more of an application question.

Sometimes inappropriate command words are used in questions. For example, in (3/4/4) cited above, it would have been better to use 'describe' or 'comment on' instead of 'explain'. The following is one more example of an inappropriate command word.

Speak about the nature of the relationships among the different families in Hard Times.  
(3/8/2)

The use of the word 'speak' here is an example of the interference of Arabic with English.



It is noticed that in most of the question papers, the students are given no options at all and almost all the questions are compulsory. Therefore, the total number of questions in the question paper is very small. In two of the question papers, there are only three questions in the entire question paper. In some question papers, the total number of the questions is 4 or 5.

It has been noticed that some question papers mention the marks assigned to each question and the expected length of the answer. In one of the question papers, only the expected length of the answer is given and no marks are specified. In one of the question papers, neither of the two is mentioned and there are only questions in the question paper. It is hoped that some of the deficiencies pointed out in this section will be removed from future question papers of this university.

### **3.5 Tikrit University**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction**

Tikrit University is located in the north of Iraq and it was established in 1987. During a short span, it has become one of the well-known universities in Iraq. In this university, they have Women's College in which English is one of the departments. This university also has the department of English, which is a part of the College of Education.

#### **3.5.2 The Types of Questions**

Question papers in this university present all the three types of questions on literature-- essay type, short answer and objective. A majority of questions in this university are essay type questions. Their percentage in the data is 48.73. Each such question carries

marks between 10 and 12.5. The following questions illustrate essay type questions asked in this university.

Comment on the effect of the west wind on earth from Shelley's viewpoint. (4/9/5)

What is the role of the Ghost in Hamlet? What are its orders to Hamlet? Why does it wear an armed uniform? (4/16/7)

Write an essay on Edmond Spenser's poem: "Like as a ship..." paying attention to the speaker, the situation, the theme, the meaning and the form of the poem. (4/13/6)

There are also short answer questions on literature asked in this university. Their percentage in the data is 45.37. The following are some examples of short answer questions.

Write a character sketch of Roger Chillingworth showing what kind of character he is. (4/14/5)

Compare between tragedy and comedy. (4/16/4)

Define and explain the plot of "The Open Window". (4/2/8)

Many of short answer questions consist of specific tasks related to the literary extracts given. For example,

Comment on the following:

O sages standing in God's... a dying animal (4/6/1)

In not more than 5-6 lines comment on the following:

Your mother told our mother you weren't allowed to speak to us. (4/12/1)

Mention the name of the poet and the title of the poem and explain in brief the following:

Will no one tell me what she sings?

Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow. (4/1/1)

It is noticeable that the first half of (4/1/1) is an objective question and the second half is a short answer question. The whole question is treated as a short answer question in this analysis.

There are very few objective questions asked in these question papers. The main purpose of these is to test the student's knowledge of minute details from and about literary texts. All such questions in the question papers ask students to fill in the blanks in the given statements and the rubric uniformly used is 'complete the following'. The following items illustrate such statements.

The lyre in 'Ode to the West Wind' can be identified with ----- (4/1/7)

Objective questions also ask for definitions of literary terms. For example,

Define an autobiography. (4/2/7)

Each of the objective questions asked in this university carries one or two marks.

### **3.5.3 The Structure of Questions**

It is remarkable that most of the questions asked in this university are in the form of Imperative sentences and there are relatively very few Interrogative sentences. The percentage of imperative sentences is 52.1. The following are some examples of such questions.

Describe the modern man in T.S.Eliot's "The love song of Alfred Prufrock". (4/8/5)

Talk about the symbolism in "Cat in the Rain". (4/12/11)

State whether or not Nathaniel Hawthorne supports the puritans' way of life in his *The Scarlet Letter*. (4/14/7)

There are a few Interrogative sentences used as questions in the data. For example,

What is the relationship between the structure and the theme of "Kubla Khan"? (4/1/10)

How do you understand Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar"? (4/10/5)

Do you think that Santiago was destroyed or defeated? (4/12/7)

There are variations on these two basic patterns. The most frequent variation consists of the pattern Declarative + Imperative. For example,

W.B.Yeats used some images in "Sailing to Byzantium". Mention them with a (sic) reference to the poem itself. (4/4/7)

The other variations involving the imperative are Interrogative + Imperative and Interrogative + Interrogative + Imperative.

Do you find Santiago as a hopeful man in "The Old Man and the Sea"? Explain. (4/3/8)

What is the pastoral poem? What are the types of the pastoral? Comment on Christopher Marlowe's "Come Live with me and be my Love" as a pastoral poem commenting on the speaker and the situation, the theme and the language of the poem. (4/13/4)

The following question consists of three interrogative sentences.

What is the role of the Ghost in Hamlet? What are its orders to Hamlet? Why does it wear an armed uniform? (4/16/7)

A variation involving the interrogative is Declarative + Interrogative. The following example illustrates this pattern.

War criticism is a main feature in the modern poetry. How do you understand the anti-war poem that you have studied this year? (4/7/9)

### **3.5.4 The Key Words**

The most frequent key word used in these question papers is 'comment'. The percentage of its occurrence is 42.82. For example,

Comment on anti-war poet in "An Irish Airman foresees his Death". (4/8/7)

The other frequently used command words are 'mention', 'identify', 'define', 'describe', 'discuss' and 'complete'. For example,

Mention the name of the poet and the title of the poem and... (4/1/1)

Describe the modern man in T.S.Eliot's "The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock". (4/8/5)

Identify and comment on the following. (4/2/1)

Wickham's appearance, in *Pride and Prejudice*, is not similar to his reality. Discuss.

(4/14/2)

The most frequently used wh- question word in the data is 'what'. For example,

What are the characteristics of modern poetry? (4/8/4)

What are the structure and the theme of ''Kubla Kahan''? (sic) (4/9/7)

The other frequently used question word in the data is 'how'. For example,

How do you understand Tennyson's ''Crossing the Bar''? (4/1/9) and (4/10/5)

Show how *The Great Gatsby* reflects all the characteristics of the modern novel. (4/15/2)

### **3.5.5 What is being Tested?**

It is found that all the questions set in this university are memory-based questions.

Students with good memory can reproduce details about literary authors and texts. Many questions are exclusively based on memory. For example,

Comment of the structure of ''Kubla Khan'' and the sources of the poem. (4/10/6)

What are the general features of Shakespearean comedy? (4/16/5)

However, many questions also require students to think independently on their own. The percentage of such questions in the data is 57.98. The following examples illustrate such questions.

''Strange meeting'' is considered as (sic) an anti-war poem. Why? (4/6/5)

In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen presents negative examples of marriage. Mention these examples in brief showing whether Austen is with or against them. (4/14/1)

A large number of questions involve comprehension of the given literary extracts. Students are asked to explain, identify and comment on them. For example,

Comment on the following with a special reference to the underlined words,

The salmon falls, the mackerel crowded seas...

Monument of unageing intellect (4/5/1)

There are a few questions involving the student's personal response. For example,

Do you think that Santiago was destroyed or defeated? (4/12/9)

How do you understand Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar'? (4/10/5)

There are very few questions involving the application of concepts or points to the literary texts. For example,

"Frost at Midnight" is a typical romantic poem, explain in the light of the features of romantic poetry. (4/9/4)

Show how *The Great Gatsby* reflects all the characteristics of the modern novel. (4/15/2)

### **3.5.6 Concluding Comments**

It has been pointed out above that there are very few objective questions in the question papers of this university and that most of the questions are either essay type or short

answer type. Some of the essay type questions are worded as objective questions. For example,

Do you think that Santiago was destroyed or defeated? (4/12/9)

Theoretically, it is possible to answer this question using only 'yes' or 'no'. But 10 marks allotted to the question indicate that it is an essay type question. Ideally, the paper-setter should have added the instruction 'Explain your point of view'. In some questions command words like 'talk' and 'give me' are used. For example,

Give me a brief explanation of ''Tithonus''. (4/9/6)

In this question the personal reference to the paper-setter is inappropriate.

Some of the questions are too general and vague and lack in focus. For example,

How do you understand Tennyson's ''Crossing the Bar''? (4/1/9)

It has been indicated above that there are grammatical and other types of errors in some of the questions. They need to be always in faultless English. In the following example, the question is not a complete sentence.

What about the symbolism and the theme of ''Cat in the Rain''? (4/2/6)

In the following example, the word 'define' is a wrong lexical choice.

Define and explain the plot of '' The Open Window''. (4/2/8)

In the following question, the preposition ' in ' should be replaced by 'from'.

What is portrait of modern man in T.S.Eliot's point of view? (4/4/6)



## **3.6 University of Basrah**

### **3.6.1 Introduction**

The University of Basrah is recognized as one of the oldest and best universities in Iraq. Earlier it was a part of the University of Baghdad and it became an independent university in 1964. The university is well-known for English studies.

### **3.6.2 The Types of Questions**

In this university, all the three types of questions--objective, short answer and essay type--have been set on literature and literary texts. Even if the answers to essay type questions are expected to be long, in this university they are expected to be shorter than in other contexts including India. Some question papers even include the instruction 'be brief and to the point'. Another common instruction is 'Avoid language ERRORS and IRRLEVANCY'. A majority of questions asked in this university are essay type questions. Their percentage in the data is 79.50. In many question papers marks assigned to questions have not been indicated at all. However, in cases where marks are indicated, they range between 10 and 20. It is noticed that the questions set in this university are themselves longer than in many other universities. This happens when the question consists of a relatively long quotation or statement. For example,

Written under the influence of the drug, Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan', in a dream vision, unlinks Coleridge's view of the impossibility of achieving pleasure in this world even if only in dreams. Elaborate. (5/20/3)

“Underneath its romantic fable, Jane Eyre is the drama of a self-sustaining individuality, assailed on many sides, hard pressed, fighting desperately for survival-never conquered”.

(5/2/2)

Incidentally, it may be noted that there is no functional key word in the question and students are not instructed explicitly about what they are expected to do. Sometimes questions are long because a test item consists of many sub-questions. For example,

What challenges or trials does Jane face at Gateshead and at Lowood/ What do we learn about Jane from her responses to these trials? Do you see any signs of personal growth or change in Jane these setting (sic)? (5/2/3)

The following are other examples of essay type questions.

Gulliver seems too dull and naïve, thus he ends up being passive in most of the situations in which he finds himself. Discuss referring to his first voyage. (5/11/1)

Discuss the portrayal of Dr. Primrose’s family. (4/17/4)

There are a few short answer questions in the data. Wherever marks are mentioned, it is noticed that short answer questions have generally been assigned less than 10 marks. For example,

What are the main approaches to literary study? Discuss briefly any one of them. (5/6/2)

Define the following writers referring to their most important achievements in English poetry.

1. Geoffrey Chaucer

2. William Shakespeare (5/12/2)

Give reasons for the belated arrival of English Renaissance in England. (5/19/9)

The following is a short answer question and this is clear from the tasks that a student is expected to perform. Even if the question has been allotted 15 marks, no one would be able to write a long answer to the question.

Determine Prevailing meter, Rhyme scheme and Imagery in the following stanza.

That time of year...

... The sweet birds song. (5/6/3)

Some of the short answer questions expect students to perform a specific task. For example,

Examine the poetic devices in the following verses:

If Music be the food of love, play on

Give me excess of it. (5/19/1)

There are very few objective questions in the question papers set at the University of Basrah. Some of them ask students to define terms from literature and literary criticism.

For example,

Define 'aside'. (5/14/1)

Some of objective questions assign a specific and limited task to students. For example,

Specify and underline the figures of speech used in the following lines:

The plan of flew as a cloud

His feet were rafts. (5/15/5)

Some of objective questions require students to fill in the blanks with appropriate words or phrases. For example,

Complete the following:

1. The leader of Metaphysical school is.....

2. The followers of the Neo-classical school are..... (5/19/10)

### **3.6.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of questions set in this university are in the form of imperative sentences. Their percentage in the data is 40.16. In some of the question papers all or most of the questions are imperatives. For example,

Write in detail on the ‘Significance of King Lear today’. (5/1/6)

Briefly write on the plot summary of Dicken’s (sic) Great Expectations. (5/10/2)

Comment on the literary work as an entity in itself. (5/15/6)

In the following example, the test item consists of two imperatives.

Sketch the characters of Gloucester and Albany. Give examples. (5/1/2)

Some questions consist of an imperative along with a statement. For example,

Investigating the creative process is one of the areas where psychology can come into criticism. Explore this area with a focus on its significance to the study of literary movements. (5/3/3)

Another structure commonly used in framing test items is interrogative sentence. For example,

To what extent are the above lines applicable to this part of the world, using your individual experiences as your frame of reference? (5/21/6)

How does the researcher present the notes taken from sources in his research paper? (5/7/4)

The following test item consists of two interrogative sentences.

What is setting? What are its functions in fiction and drama? (5/12/6)

The following test item consists of a statement followed by five interrogative sentences.

A boy is picked on by the boys because he is fat, asthmatic, and nearsighted. If this were a primitive hunting community, what would be the boy's probable fate? Is scapegoating the weak or different justifiable from an evolutionary perspective? From a moral perspective? How do the dominant boys get or stay that way? Do girls use different strategies than boys depending on who they are with? (5/16/2)

The following test item illustrates the structure declarative+ interrogative + imperative.

A critique of its own culture T.S.Eliot's "The Waster land"... living dryness aridity. Agree or disagree? Justify. (5/4/3)

The following example illustrates the pattern Interrogative+ Interrogative + Imperative.

What is point of view? What are the four main points of view in fiction? Discuss. (5/14/6)

### **3.6.4 The Key Words**

The most frequently used key word in the test items set by this university is ‘what’. Its percentage in the data is 27.04. For example,

What is meant by word accent and rhetorical word and what is the difference between them? (5/12/2)

John Donne says: “No man is an island”. Having read Lord of the Flies, what is the position of your personal and cultural philosophy on the nature of humanity? (5/16/3)

The next most frequently used key word in the question papers in this university is ‘discuss’. Its percentage in the data is 21.31. For example,

Discuss the theme of ‘Innocence’ in Goldsmith’s The Vicar of Wakefield. (5/17/5)

The following example contains both the most frequently used key words.

What is the imagery? Discuss with examples. (5/15/8)

The other frequently used command words are ‘define’, ‘explain’, ‘elaborate’, ‘justify’, ‘agree’, ‘demonstrate’, ‘examine’ and ‘give an example’ in the order of frequency. The following test items illustrate the use of these key words.

Define the following literary terms with examples where necessary:

1 - Monologue    2- Soliloquy....    (5/5/2)

Compare the characters of Jane and Helen Burns referring to their philosophy in life.  
(5/18/3)

Explain Crusoe's developing attitude towards God in the novel, giving specific details.  
(5/8/4)

Agree or disagree with the following statement "Robinson is a representative of the homo economics". (5/8/3)

The other question words apart from 'what' used in the data are 'how' and 'why'. For example,

How could you account for Jane's trials at both Gateshead and Lowood. (sic) Discuss in detail. (5/18/1)

### **3.6.5 What is being Tested?**

All the questions set in this university are found to involve the students' memory in answering them. They are required to remember details about literary texts, literary history and literary movements. For example,

Write in detail on the construction of Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. (5/1/5)

Major themes of chapter (5) in Wuthering Heights. (5/10/5)

Both these questions involve the memory of very specific and narrow details. Such a question also involves a very close and careful study of the text.

Objective questions in these question papers naturally involve the element of memory and the answer cannot be guessed. For example,

The first who described the followers of John Donne was.....

The two pioneers of English lyric poetry are..... (5/19/10)

A number of questions involve the comprehension of the statement made or the quotation given. For example,

Neoclassical poetry, though advocates a classical spirit, is distinguished by some new elements and forms, (sic) In a short critical essay, trace what is new in neoclassical poetry. (5/20/1)

Explain “We’ll make our leisure’s to attend on yours” (from The Merchant of Venice). (5/1/2)

While answering these and many other questions, students need to think on their own and substantiate their own point of view. Thinking is one of the most important faculties tested in these questions. For example,

Investigating the creative process is one of the areas where psychology can come into criticism. Explore this area, with focus on its significance to the study of literary movements. (5/3/3)

Humanistically speaking, how could you evaluate Robinson’s relationships to other characters in the novel? (5/9/2)

Questions which ask students whether they agree or disagree with the statement made are questions which expect students to think critically and independently and justify their points of view.



To what extent (sic) could you consider Shaw's Arms and the Man as a 'well- made' play? (5/9/2)

What challenges or trials does Jane face at Gateshead and at Lowood? What do we learn about Jane from her responses to these trials? Do you see any signs of personal growth or change in Jane these settings (sic)? (5/2/3)

Replace the word 'monarch' with 'president' in the above lines: how would you respond to them? (5/21/5)

It may be noted that sometimes there is an overlap between personal response questions and those based on thinking and it is not possible to clearly distinguish between them.

### **3.6.6 Concluding Remarks**

It has been pointed out above that a majority of questions asked in this university are essay type questions and a large number of them are worded as imperative sentences. Because there are more essay type questions, the total number of questions in most of the question papers is small. In one of the question papers, there are only three questions in all and some question papers have a total of four questions each. It is noticed that many question papers do not specify either the total marks or marks for individual questions. In some question papers, a question carries fractional marks e.g. (12.5). It is remarkable that all the question papers have the names and signatures of the instructors and the heads of the department. Many of them wish students 'best of luck' at the end. But the rest of the question papers are in the formal style. There are a few errors of the choice of lexical items, grammar and punctuation in some of the question papers. They have been

indicated above in the examples given. It must be ensured that there are no errors of any type in the question papers.

### **3.7 A Comparison of Questions on Literature in Five Iraqi Universities**

The five Iraqi universities selected for this study--University of Baghdad, Diyala University, University of Salahaddin, Tikrit University and University of Basrah-- are considered to be representative of Iraqi universities in general. There are more than 18 universities in Iraq and the five universities selected typify the universities in Iraq.

It has been noticed that in all these five universities, students are wished good luck by paper setters and examiners. Another remarkable feature is that the names of the examiners and the heads of departments are printed in the question papers. In some cases, the question papers have even their signatures. The reason for this is that only the teacher who teaches a particular course is the examiner and therefore, the questions are entirely based on his approach to the teaching of that course. He is solely responsible for any errors in or problems with the question papers. Many question papers in Iraq are found to have a relatively small number of questions in each of them. Many question papers have a total of four or five questions. The smallest number of questions in a question paper is found to be three and that means that students need to write only three answers in their answerbooks. An interesting feature of some Iraqi question papers is that marks allotted to either individual questions or the entire question papers are not mentioned. In some cases (e.g. 3/9), however, not only are the marks mentioned, but also the expected length of the answers in words and the amount of time that students are expected to spend on each question are also mentioned. For example, the instruction for question number 3/9/2

specifies 120 words, 5 marks and 30 minutes. It is also observed that the number of options to questions in some question papers is very limited and in some question papers (e.g. 3/8) there are no options at all and all the questions are compulsory. It is debatable whether essay type questions on literature should have no options at all in the examination.

It is noticed that in Iraqi universities, all the three types of questions--essay type, short answer and objective--are asked. Except in Diyala University, a majority of questions asked in each university are essay type questions. It is interesting to note that in Diyala University, the number of essay type questions and short answer questions is exactly the same. The highest percentage of essay type questions is found to be 79.50 in the University of Basrah and their lowest percentage is 48.73 in Tikrit University. The highest percentage of short answer questions is found to be 45.37 in Tikrit University and their lowest percentage is found to be 13.93 in the University of Basrah.

All the Iraqi universities have very few objective questions. Among the five universities, Diyala University has the highest number of objective questions. Their percentage of occurrence is 17.64. It needs to be noted that the distinction between short answer questions and objective questions is not clearly maintained and some questions have elements of both the types. For example,

Mention the name of the poet and the title of the poem and explain in brief the following.

(4/1/1)

In this question, the first half asking for the poet's name and the title of the poem is an objective question, but the latter half is a short answer question. In the analysis of the

data, this has been treated as a short answer question. Sometimes a question is worded as an objective question, but it is asked as a short answer or an essay type question. For example,

Agree or disagree with the following statement “Robinson is a representative of the homo economics”. (5/5/3)

This question is deceptively an objective question and it could be answered in one short sentence. However, it is understood that it is an essay type question from the other questions preceding and following it which are offered as options to this question.

In all the five universities, a majority of questions are in the form of imperative sentences. The highest percentage of such questions is 56.61 in Diyala University and their lowest percentage is 40.16 in the University of Basrah. The most frequent command word used in these questions is ‘discuss’ in the universities of Salahaddin, Diyala and Basrah. The most frequent command word in the universities of Tikrit and Baghdad is ‘comment’. It is remarkable that the two most frequent command words in the universities of Diyala and Baghdad are ‘comment’ and ‘discuss’. This may be linked with the fact that in all Iraqi universities, there are a large number of essay type questions, because the two command words are very common in essay type questions. Relatively speaking, there are fewer interrogative sentences as questions in all the five universities. The most frequent question word in all the universities is ‘what’.

It has been noticed that all the questions in all the five universities are based on memory at least to some extent. They involve memory regarding themes, characterization, plot structure etc and also the important names, works, dates and movements in the history of

English literature. It is found that different questions depend on memory to different degrees. Some of them are totally memory-dependent, while others depend on other abilities and skills in addition to memory.

Among the other abilities required for answering literature questions, thinking is given greater priority by all the five universities. Such questions require students to think independently and critically and formulate an answer which has at least some degree of originality. The students' ability to explain thoughts or points is tested here and they are required to justify their point of view and provide appropriate examples. The universities of Baghdad and Tikrit have a large number of questions involving the capacity of thinking.

All the five universities have questions testing the students' ability for comprehension and interpretation. Sometimes a statement is made in the question or a quotation is given. Some questions have literary extracts in the question papers and there are either questions based on them or students are asked to explain them. These questions expect the students to understand literal meanings and also to perceive implied meanings. Comprehension is undoubtedly an important ability in the study of literature. The universities of Baghdad and Tikrit have a large number of such questions.

There are also questions requiring students to have a close study of texts. This is exemplified by questions asking students to explain literary extracts and in some objective questions based on minute details about authors, texts, periods etc. Among the five universities, the University of Baghdad has the highest number of such questions.

Personal responses are very significant in the study of literature. Questions eliciting such responses make students link literature to real life or sometimes to their own lives. They may ask for the student's preferences or choices and they are required to justify them. Among the five universities studied here, the university of Basrah and Baghdad have more personal response questions than other universities.

The observations made above give us a reliable picture of the questions based on literature in five Iraqi universities. It is hoped that this is a representative picture of Iraqi universities in general.

### **3.8 Iraqi Teachers' Views on the Teaching and Testing of Literature**

The average teaching experience of the Iraqi teachers used as informants in this study is about 10 years. This indicates that they have a reasonably good amount of teaching experience, though it is not very long. It is noted that all the Iraqi teachers love the teaching of literature. Many of them think that it is closely connected with life and culture. Some teachers believe that it is a source of pleasure and satisfaction and others think that the study of literature makes them versatile and creative. About half the teachers use only English in the teaching of literature in their class and this provide students with exposure to English. The others use both English and Arabic and Arabic is used mainly to explain difficult words and concepts.

All the Iraqi teachers employ the technique of lecturing in their class, but they also make a reasonable use of other techniques as well. Half the teachers ask questions in their class to get feedback from their students. Some of them use audio-visual aids in the teaching of literature and encourage students to make presentations or participate in discussions.

About half the teachers have had some training in the formulation of questions and assessment. This has acquainted them with procedures of setting valid questions and assessing them in a just manner. They were asked to specify whether they consulted their colleagues regarding the questions set by them. More than half the teachers do not consult any one regarding questions and some of them believe that every teacher has his own distinctive style of setting questions. One teacher points out that he shows his questions only to the chairman and another teacher thinks that it is necessary to consult others only at the beginning of one's career.

Teachers were asked to specify whether they approved of having only objective questions in the testing of literature. Only one teacher thinks that it is all right to have only objective questions in the testing of literature. All the other teachers prefer to have a judicious combination of objective and descriptive questions. One of them thinks that having only objective questions makes cheating possible and increases the element of chance. One of them points out that only subjective questions can test the skill of writing and therefore, it is necessary to have them.

They were also asked to specify the types of questions most suitable for the testing of literature. About 30% teachers think that essay type questions are most appropriate for testing students' literary competence, because they test a wide range of language skills, knowledge and power of expression. Most others prefer to have a combination of essay type questions with short answer questions or objective questions. Some plead for a combination of essay type, short answer and objective questions.

As far as the criteria for awarding marks to questions are concerned, many teachers give importance to knowledge of the subject matter, content of the answer and the relevance of the answer to the question. Some of them attach importance to coherence and clarity of the answer. For all of them the correct and appropriate use of grammar and vocabulary are important. About half the teachers are satisfied with the current practices of setting questions and assessing answers. About 20% teachers are totally dissatisfied with these practices. A few teachers have suggested that there should be more searching questions testing students' knowledge of literature and repetition of questions should be avoided.

Some teachers suggest that modern techniques of teaching literature should be used following 'scientific' methods of teaching literature. According to some of them, it is necessary to change the syllabus of literature at regular intervals. Some teachers suggest that there should be a committee of experienced teachers and experts to set question papers and an oral test should be introduced to test the students' literary competence.

### **3.9 Iraqi Students' Views on the Teaching and Testing of Literature**

All the Iraqi students whose views were obtained to the questionnaire are interested in the study of literature. Some of them believe that it gives them knowledge of human life and social problems and it improves their imagination. Some of them think study of literature helps them in improving their language skills.

Students were asked to specify whether their teachers taught English literature through English or their mother tongue. About half of the students point out that their teachers use both English and Arabic while teaching literature. Arabic is used to explain difficult words and expressions and to explain culture-specific concepts. 30% students point out



that their teachers use only English, while the remaining 20% students mention that they use only Arabic

About 30% students make it a point to read literary texts, because it helps them in understanding literature. One of the other students reads only poetry and drama and he is not interested in reading fiction. One of them reads only important paragraphs. 30% students never read the texts and they entirely depend on ready-made notes so that they are prepared for examinations.

Students were asked about the techniques of teaching employed by their teachers in the class. Half the students have teachers who only lecture throughout the class and do not use any other technique. Therefore, the class is only the teachers' monologue. Most of the other teachers use questions and answers and films as additional techniques. Only one student points out that there are occasionally discussions in the class.

Students were asked whether they preferred to have objective questions or descriptive questions on literature. 50% students prefer only descriptive questions and 20% students prefer only objective questions. The remaining 30% students like to have a combination of both descriptive and objective questions. One of the students thinks that objective questions are easier to answer. All of them read the questions carefully before answering them. This helps them in understanding questions properly. Two students re-read the questions so that they understand them better.

Students were asked to specify whether different teachers awarded them different marks for the same answers. Almost all the students answer this question in the affirmative. They think that personal opinions and views of teachers have this effect. Half the students

do not understand why they have got a certain number of marks, whereas 30% students are able to understand this. The remaining students understand it only sometimes. In general, many students believe that there is subjectivity in the assessment of their answers.

60% students consult their teachers regarding improvement of their performance and the rest of the students do not do so. Many students suggest that teachers should change their methods of teaching and they should make use of various audio-visual aids. Some students feel that teachers should encourage originality of thinking on the part of students.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE TESTING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN INDIA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

India has a long history of teaching and testing of English literature. During the last two centuries, a lot of changes and modifications have taken place in the testing of literature in India. It would be interesting to trace the history of the teaching and testing of English literature in India and make a longitudinal study of this. However, this is outside the scope of the present study. This study makes analysis of literature question papers in five selected Indian universities during the period 2000-2010. Such a study is rewarding, as it would reveal a lot about the aims and objectives of teaching English literature in India, curriculum design, methods and techniques of teaching literature and finally the students' achievement and assessment of their performance.

Observation of the teaching of literature in India suggests that even if students do reasonably well in literature examinations, their marks have no correlation with their literary competence. They seem to study for examinations and perhaps the study of literature has no tangible influence on their minds or lives. It is hoped that this study will bring about a positive change in the teaching and testing of English literature in India. The following sections present crucial aspects of the literature question papers analysed from each of the five Indian universities. Section 4.7 offers generalizations based on the analysis of literature question papers from all the five Indian universities selected.

## **4.2 Sardar Patel University**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

Sardar Patel University located at Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat is a well-known university established in 1987. The undergraduate question papers of this university on literature present abundant variety in terms of the types of question, structure, abilities involved and marks. The following sections present an analysis of the questions asked in this university.

### **4.2.2 The Types of Questions**

In this university all the three types of questions--objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions--have been asked. In the data analysed, there are only two objective questions, 233 short answer questions and 98 essay type questions. The two objective questions appear in T.Y.B.A examination of paper IX- History of English Literature and they have been assigned 10 marks. In one of them, students have been asked to give two titles of the works written by the author specified. In the other question, students are asked to match the titles of literary works with the names of the authors. In both the columns, ten items appear. This is obviously easier than a question in which the number of items in one column is greater than that in another column. It is interesting to know that in no other question paper has the university used this type of question.

As pointed out above, there are more short answer questions than essay type questions in the question papers of this university. A majority of short answer questions in these question papers have the rubric 'Write short notes on the following'. However, sometimes

there are regular questions asked as short answer questions. We recognize them as short answer questions from the fact that they deal with a limited aspect of the literary text. For example,

Discuss the appropriateness of the title of the poem 'Old Woman'. (6/9/8)

However, in case of some questions, the phrasing does not indicate that it is a short answer question. For example,

Critically examine the poem 'The World'. (6/9/9)

The phrasing of the question suggests that this is an essay type question. But students have been asked to answer three such questions for 12 marks. That is, each question carries four marks. This indicates that a short answer to this question is expected. Through the juxtaposition of 6/9/8 and 6/9/9, we identify them as short answer questions.

It is found that 29.42% of the questions are long answer (essay type) questions. All the essay type questions have the weightage of 11 or 12 marks each. Many of them have the rubric 'Write a detailed note on...' For example,

Write a detailed note on the thematic concerns of the poem 'The Waste Land' (6/1/1)

The following are more examples of essay type questions.

Examine 'Every Man in His Humour' as a mirror of manners of Ben Jonson's time.

(6/4/4)

Estimate Edmund Spenser as a poet's poet. (6/15/5)

### **4.2.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of questions in Sardar Patel University are phrased as imperative sentences and the most frequent rubric of the questions is 'Write short notes on the following'. There are many variations on this rubric. Some of them are 'Write a detailed note on ...' and 'Write a critical note on ...'. Sometimes the imperative has the form 'Answer the following' and this is not followed by questions, but by topics for short notes. For example,

Answer the following:

Miss Prism (6/1/16)

Will's married life (6/1/17)

It may be pointed out that 'answer' is a wrong choice of the verb for such a question. The other verbs like 'consider', 'examine', 'evaluate', 'explain' and 'discuss' are also used in imperatives. 74.17% of the questions in this university are in the form of Imperatives and this is the most dominant pattern. There are variations on the basic pattern and these variations are not calculated in the percentage given above. The most frequent variation is the structure Declarative + Imperative. For example,

'' Mr. Rochester was not courteous and polite but he was a good man by heart''.

Comment. (6/2/13)

Sometimes the structure of a question consists of Declarative + Interrogative + Imperative. For example,

“Christy is a very ambitions (sic) character” do you (sic) agree with this statement? Give your reasons. (6/10/16)

(In this question, the word 'ambitions' is wrongly used and it should be replaced by the word 'ambitious'. There is no punctuation mark at the end of the quotation. The first letter of the question should be capital.)

Sometimes the question consists of two Imperatives. For example,

Mention the important features of the Romantic Age. Comment briefly on the works that perfectly embody the spirit of the Romantic Age. (6/15/2)

The questions asked in the question paper also consist of the structure Interrogative +Interrogative. For example,

What is Metaphysical Poetry? What are the contributions of the Metaphysical poets?  
(6/15/7)

A notable question in the question paper consists of an objective question in the Imperative followed by another Imperative. For example,

Define the term "Short Story" and explain the major features of short story form. (6/5/1)

#### **4.2.4 The Key Words**

The key words used in questions are significant in that they indicate to students what they are expected to do in the answers and help them to offer relevant answers. The most frequent rubric used in the questions in Sardar Patel University is 'Write short notes on the following' or 'Write notes on the following'. A variation on this rubric found in only

one question paper is 'Write critical notes on the following'. A notable feature of this university is that usually there are no options in this question and students are expected to write on all the topics. Only in question papers of the year 2000, there are options given to students. They are generally asked to write on two of the four topics given. 44.58 % of the questions in this university have this dominant rubric. The next most frequently used rubric is 'Comment on the following'. Under this usually a quotation is given as an item. The students are expected to comprehend it, explain it and offer comments on it. A frequently used key word is 'explain'. For example,

Explain with illustrations the optimism expressed in Browning's love poems that you have studied. (6/18/13)

Another key word frequently used is 'discuss'. For example,

Discuss in detail the essential aspects of One Act Play as a form of literature. (6/8/11)

Other key words used are 'examine', 'describe', 'appreciate', 'evaluate', 'illustrate' and 'consider'. The most frequently used wh-question word is 'what'. For example,

What did the giant do when he saw children playing in his garden? (6/5/5)

The other question words used are 'which', 'how', 'how far' and 'who'. Sometimes a yes-no question is asked and it is followed by 'Give your reasons'. For example,

'' Christy is a very ambitious (sic) character'' do you (sic) agree with this statement?  
Give your reasons. (6/10/16)



#### **4.2.5 What is being Tested?**

It is noticed that all the questions set in this university test the students' memory. Only students with good memory can answer these questions efficiently. Memory relates to textual details, critics' opinions, teachers' notes and even the material in guides, bazaar notes and catechisms. It is remarkable that cent per cent of the questions asked in this university are based on memory. It must be mentioned here that many of these questions are based exclusively on memory. For example,

Write a detailed note on the thematic concerns of the poem "The Waste Land". (6/1/1)

Examine "Under the Greenwood Tree" as a romantic comedy. (6/2/7)

What message do we get from the poem "The Character of Happy Life"? (6/9/21)

In some of the questions based on memory, however, other abilities and faculties are also involved. For example,

"Shylock is meant to be a villain in terms of the romantics (sic) comedy but because of the multi-dimensionality of his character we sympathize him (sic)" Explain and Elaborate. (6/4/10)

This question primarily involves comprehension of the quotation on the part of students, because without it they would not be able to respond to this question in a relevant manner. They are also required to think about the quotation in the light of what they remember about the text. Explanation and elaboration are result of individual thinking on the part of students. In this way this question is based on memory, comprehension of quotation and thinking.

Write a note on a poem that you like the most. Also give reasons for your liking. (6/9/27)

This question is primarily based on the students' personal response. The students are free to choose any poem that they like and there is a lot of scope for students to give reasons for their preference. Some of these can even be individual reasons, but students are expected to express them in a formal way. Once they select the poem, they can write about it only on the basis of memory. Giving reasons for their love of the poem involves thinking and analysis of the poem. In this way this question is based on personal response, memory and thinking.

41.69% of the questions involve thinking on the part of students in addition to memory. Thinking is a vital ability for students of literature. Whenever there is a quotation from a literary text or a piece of criticism, students are required to think about it. Literary analysis and explanation involve the ability of thinking. Interestingly, the percentage mentioned above indicates that more than half the questions in the question paper can be answered on the basis of memory and without thinking or analysis on the part of students. The following are examples of the questions involving thinking on the part of students.

'Romanticism is beauty added to strangeness' Discuss the characteristics of the Romantic Age in the light of this statement. (6/10/1)

Examine 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' as a Christian allegory. (6/2/1)

'The Merchant of Venice' is an exquisite piece of romantic comedy verging on tragedy. Explain and Elaborate. (6/6/1)

It is noticed in the data 17.52% of the questions are based on the students ability to comprehend the given extract from a literary work or a piece of literary criticism. In such cases, comprehension seems to be the primary ability involved in answering the questions. For example,

''The lottery of the casket is a test of character'' Examine the dramatic significance of the casket story in ''The Merchant of Venice'' with reference to the statement. (6/4/1)

Explain and comment on the following:

''Style is not the coat of a writer but his skin''. (6/16/2)

''I don't want to be an Ideal wife. I want to be a Real Woman.'' Explain how these thoughts are reflected in Vasudha's character. (6/17/13)

This is a quotation from the text and students must be able to understand the difference between an Ideal wife and a Real woman. The questions which ask students to explain the given literary extract with reference to the context certainly involve comprehension. For example,

Explain with reference to the context the following:

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away. (6/9/4)

A large number of questions require the students to think critically about something and give their considered opinion. Sometimes there is an overlap between personal response

questions and questions involving thinking. The term 'thinking' is used here to refer to critical thinking with some amount of originality on the part of students. The skill required is of the ability to argue consistently and convincingly about a particular point of view like an advocate. It is interesting to note that 40.94% of the questions involve thinking, though many of them also test other abilities as well. For example,

Do you agree with Ruskin's views that 'it is the business of the artist to show'? Give your reasons. (6/12/15)

The rubric 'Give your response' involves both a personal response and thinking.

Write a critical note on Interlude. (6/18/4)

It is interesting to find that the word 'critical' in the rubric of the question makes it a question based on thinking, but without that word, it would be a question just based on memory.

Ideally, all the questions should involve a close study of the text on the part of students, but most of them can be answered exclusively on the basis of memory, as pointed out earlier. The term 'close study of the text' is used here when the question is based on an aspect of the text which is very specific and precise and when it is necessary for students to remember minute details of the text. This cannot be done without a close study of the text. For example,

Write a detailed note on the opening of 'Under the Greenwood Tree'. (6/7/16)

Since the question concerns only the opening of the text, the student cannot answer this just on the basis of ready-made summary of the text or broad notes. Only a close study of

the text would enable a student to answer this question satisfactorily. The following is a question similar to the one given above.

Comment on the end of “Sunday Costs Five Pesos”. (6/8/21)

If a question is based on a narrow technical aspect of the text, the answer is based on a close study of the text. For example,

Explain symbolic images used in the poem of W.B Yeats that you have studied. (6/14/16)

Some questions require the students to apply a particular critical statement to a text and analyse it from that particular point of view. For example,

’The poem ‘There is a Lady Sweet and Kind’ presents the experience of love at first sight’ Elaborate. (6/9/24)

’Romanticism is beauty added to strangeness’ Discuss the characteristics of the Romantic Age in the light of this statement. (6/10/1)

#### **4.2.6 Concluding Comments**

A few interesting features have been noticed in the question papers of Sardar Patel University. As pointed out above, there are hardly any objective questions on literature in this university and most questions are either essay type questions or short answer questions. Objective questions appear in only one question paper and the weightage given to these questions is only ten marks. Another interesting feature is that there are no options in the questions requiring students to write short notes. In most such cases, the question involving short notes is an option to an essay type question. In other words, short

notes are an option to an essay-type question, but there is no internal choice for short notes. For example,

Write a detailed note on the thematic concerns of the poem "The Waste Land" (6/1/1)

OR

Write short notes on the following

i. Imagery in "The Burial of the Dead" (6/1/2)

ii. The end of "The Burial of the Dead" (6/1/3)

Some of the questions asked are too general and lack in focus. As a result, it is possible for students to write anything that they know about the topic. For example,

Write short notes on:

(1) William Golding (6/14/11)

(2) Harold Pinter (6/14/12)

Examine the significance of incident, character and plot-construction in short story with reference to the stories studied by you. (6/5/2)

This question is too broad and general, because it offers an unlimited choice to students.

One more example of such a question is the following.

Write a note on a poem that you like the most. Also give reasons for your liking. (6/9/27)

Some of the questions asked in this university have errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation. The errors have been underlined in the following examples.

“Christy is a very ambitions character”(no full stop given) do you agree with this statement? Give your reasons (6/10/16)

How the poet shows his love for his motherland and his faith in God in the poem ”I Vow to Tree my country”? (6/9/19)

Describe the apperiance and character of a lady as you find in the poem ’She walk in Beaty’ (6/9/25)

It is recommended that there should be no errors of any type in question papers and the question papers must be proof-read carefully and rigorously.

### **4.3. Shivaji University**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

Shivaji University located at Kolhapur was established in 1964 and the area covered by Shivaji University was earlier a part of the University of Pune. It has made remarkable academic progress since its inception. It now covers the districts of Kolhapur and Sangli.

#### **4.3.2 The Types of Questions**

In the question papers set by this university, all the three types of questions--objective, short answer and essay type--have been asked. A majority of questions asked in this university are short answer questions. Their percentage in the data is 41.90. The most common phrasing of these questions is ’Write short notes on ... the following’. Usually the topics for short notes are assigned 5 marks each. Many times the expected length of

the answer is not specified. However, in some question papers it is specified as 'about 150 words each'. The following are some examples of topics for short notes.

Irony in The Vendor of Sweets (7/1/12)

Characteristics of an Ode (7/4/30)

Supernatural elements in 'Kuba Khan' (7/11/20)

Setting and atmosphere in the one-act play (7/17/18)

It is noticed that in one of the question papers, 10 marks have been assigned to a short note to be written in about 150 words. The following is an example of such a topic.

Moral of 'The Ancient Mariner' (7/3/22)

The next most frequent type of question is the objective question. The percentage of such questions in the data is 32.57. It is noticed that in question papers set in 2005 and onwards, there are objective questions, but in the question papers set before 2005, there are no objective questions at all. This suggests that probably there has been a change in the pattern of the question paper since 2005 and that the significance of knowing facts and figures and minute details relating to literature is acknowledged now. The university displays variety in types of objective questions. The most common phrasing of an objective question is 'Answer the following questions in one word/ phrase or sentence each'. It is remarkable that the same marks are assigned to a one-word answer and a one-sentence answer. A student would certainly find writing a sentence a more complex task than writing a word or phrase. The following are some examples of such questions.

What are the two parts of Petrarchan Sonnet? (7/4/6)



Who supplies new and fresh ideas to the creative writers? (7/12/4)

How many years did Voltaire stay in Berlin? (7/16/4)

What is the theme of the poem 'One day I wrote Her Name'? (7/4/19)

It is likely that most students would answer 7/4/19 in a sentence and not in a word or phrase. Some students may even write two sentences.

Another type of objective question involves filling in the blanks in the sentences given. Sometimes the alternatives are not given and sometimes they are given. In the latter case, they are multiple choice questions. It needs to be pointed out that the former type of questions are potentially more difficult than the latter, because no help is provided to students in the former. The following are some examples of questions asking students to fill in the blanks where no help is provided.

The name of the periodical first started by Steele was \_\_\_\_\_. (7/7/1)

The setting of the novel 'Untouchable' is \_\_\_\_\_. (7/9/11)

Release me and restore me to the \_\_\_\_\_. (7/1/9)

The following are some examples of multiple choice questions requiring students to fill in the blanks.

The Scholar Gypsy is \_\_\_\_\_.

- |           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| a) ballad | c) pastoral elegy |
| b) song   | d) ode (7/11/7)   |

'Lord Byron's Love Letter' is written by \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Tennessee Williams                      c) Moliere
- b) Percival Wilde                              d) Fritz Karinthy      (7/17/1)

Such questions are potentially easier to answer, because there is 25% chance that the student would be right even if he does not know the answer.

Which the following is not quality (sic) of classic according to T.S.Eliot?

- a) maturity of mind                              c) maturity of language
- b) maturity of manner                          d) maturity of literature      (7/12/7)

Another type of objective question asks students to identify the odd member of a set consisting of literary terms and sometimes to rewrite the set without the odd entry. This is a challenging question and it requires students to think about the similarities and differences among the members of the set. For example,

Rewrite the following sentences by removing the odd one:

Marlowe, Spenser, Wyatt, Surrey

Corin, Silvius, Jaques, Touch Stone (sic) (7/7/8)

It may be pointed out that the rubric of this question is wrong because the entries are names of writers and not sentences.

Rewrite by removing the **odd** one:

Wills, the Grecian, Childs, Postman (7/10/8)

The next type of question is the essay type question. It is remarkable that the percentage of such questions is less (25.51) than that of the other two types of questions. In most cases, an essay type question has been assigned the weightage of 10 marks, though in a few question papers they are assigned 20 each marks. In some cases, the expected length of the answer is specified as about 250 or 300 words. For example,

Evaluate the description of beauty of the girl in the poem 'She' and explain the poetic expressions used to highlight her beauty. (7/19/20)

Discuss Jawaharlal Nehru as a scientific thinker with reference to his ideas in 'Science Goes Ahead'. (7/8/25)

Sometimes an essay type question uses the rubric 'Write a note on ...' For example,

Write a note on the Victorian women novelists. (7/2/6)

Another common rubric used in these questions is 'Write a critical appreciation of ...' or 'Write a critical note on ...' For example,

Write a critical appreciation of The Good Morrow. (7/13/15)

Write a critical note on the title of 'Pride and Prejudice'(7/14/17)

Some of the essay type questions ask students to draw character sketches. For example,

Draw a character sketch of Wasserkopf. (7/17/7)

### **4.3.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of the questions set in this university are in the form of Imperative sentences. Their percentage in the data is 68.67. Some of the most common rubrics used in such questions are 'Write short notes on...', 'Fill in the gaps in the following sentences', 'Discuss critically...' and 'Write a critical appreciation of...'. The following are examples of such questions.

Write a critical appreciation of 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' (7/16/13)

Bring out the significance of the title 'The Last Leaf' (7/17/8)

Comment on Wordsworth's view on nature as reflected in 'Tintern Abbey' (7/11/14)

28.63% of the questions consist of Interrogative sentences. For example,

How does Kamala Das treat the themes of love and sex in the prescribed poems? (7/1/3)

What does Coleridge say about primary and secondary Imagination? (7/6/5)

Who supplies new and fresh ideas to the creative writers? (7/12/4)

There are also variations on these two basic patterns. The most frequent variation consists of the pattern Interrogative + Interrogative. For example,

What are Nehru's views about organised religion? How does he define religion? (7/8/26)

The other variations consist of the patterns Declarative + Interrogative, Declarative + Imperative, Imperative + Interrogative and Interrogative + Declarative. For example,

“Shakespeare has only heroines and no heroes”. How far is this statement applicable to Rosalind in 'As You Like It'? (7/7/19)

What is a short story? Give the characteristics of short story as a form of literature. (7/9/24)

#### **4.3.4 The Key Words**

The most frequently used rubric in the question papers of this university is 'Write short notes on the following'. The percentage of such questions is 69.08. The following are some examples of topics for short notes.

Irony in the Vendor of Sweets (7/1/12)

The theme of the Lady of Shallott (7/4/24)

Two images in the poem 'Two Images' (7/8/31)

The wh-question word most frequently used in the data is 'what'. The percentage of questions beginning with this question word is 11.62. For example,

What was the last wish to Mr. White? (7/5/7)

What does the speaker in the poem 'The Female of Species' talk about? (7/19/8)

The other question words used in these question papers in the order of frequency are 'who', 'how', 'why' and 'where'. For example,

Who wrote the poem 'Philomela'? (7/4/17)

Where did the speaker in the poem 'Daddy' live like a foot for thirty years? (7/19/9)

Why does Charlotte Marry (sic) Mr. Collins? (7/11/6)

The other frequently used key words in the data are 'discuss', 'Write a critical appreciation of...', 'rewrite', 'Write a note on...' and 'comment'. For example,

Discuss in brief the contribution of the Gothic novelist to the development of the novel.  
(7/2/2)

Write a critical appreciation of the poem 'Tribute to Papa'. (7/19/18)

Comment on the motifs in *Death of A Salesman*. (7/20/18)

The other key words rarely used in the data are 'Fill in the blanks', 'Bring out', 'Draw a character sketch' and 'Compare and Contrast'. For example,

Draw the character sketch of Eliza Doolittle. (7/16/16)

Compare and contrast Prof. Higgins and Colonel Pickering. (7/16/17)

#### **4.3.5 What is being Tested?**

The analysis of the data reveals that all the questions in the question papers test the student's memory regarding literature in general, literary movements and literary texts.

Many questions are based exclusively on memory. For example,

Write a note on the themes in Jayanta Mahapatra's prescribed poems. (7/1/4)

What is Aristotle's term for imitation? (7/12/2)

What is the source of the poem, 'Tithonus'? (7/14/4)

It may be pointed out here that many objective questions are based on the knowledge of facts and figures about literature and expect students to remember minute details. 15.76% of the questions also involve thinking on the part of students. Such questions often ask students to discuss or comment on something. For example,

Comment on the appropriateness of the title 'pride and prejudice'. (7/11/16)

Discuss critically what Lamb thinks about poor relatives in his essay, 'On Poor Relatives'. (7/14/19)

Justify the title of the story, 'A Devoted Son'. (7/18/2)

Some questions are based on a close study of the text in addition to memory. All the questions which ask students to explain the selected literary extracts with reference to the context are examples of this. Objective questions are based on a close study of the text. For example,

What are the ages of Lomov and Natalya? (7/5/12)

What is the pearl of love? (7/9/4)

What is the Chinese term for 'golden age'? (7/11/2)

Another faculty involved in answering some of the questions is comprehension of the given extract, statement or quotation. For example,

''Come live with me and be my love, and we will all the pleasures prove''. Who is the reader of this statement? (7/8/10)

“Shakespeare has only heroines and no heroes”. How far is this statement applicable to Rosalind in 'As You Like It'? (7/7/19)

There are very few questions in the data involving the students' personal response. The following is an example of such a question.

Write your comment regarding the opening lines of metaphysical poetry of John Donne. (7/7/16)

#### **4.3.6 Concluding Comments**

It has been pointed out above that questions asked in Shivaji University present a rich variety of questions of all the three types--objective, short answer and essay type. Some of the questions asked are too general and lack focus. For example,

Write a short note on War Poetry. (7/15/13)

Write a short note on Death, Be Not Proud. (7/1/23)

It is possible for students to write anything and everything about the topics given and no specific aspect of the topic is highlighted. There are a few errors of syntax and punctuation. These errors have been pointed out in some of the examples given above. It has also been mentioned above that the weightage given to one word answers and one sentence answers is the same in objective questions. This does not seem to be fair. In some cases, the rubric of the questions is wrong. For example,

Rewrite the following sentences by removing the odd one:

Marlowe, Spenser, Wyatt, Surrey (7/7/8)



The items given in this question are not sentences, but they are names of authors. Such errors should be avoided and the rubric should be clear and accurate.

#### **4.4 Rajasthan University**

##### **4.4.1 Introduction**

Rajasthan University located at Jaipur is a university of long standing and it was established in 1947. The undergraduate question papers on literature set in this university have their own patterns which seem to be different from those found in other universities. There is abundant variety in literature questions with reference to the different criteria followed in this analysis.

##### **4.4.2 The Types of Questions**

In this university, all the three types of questions--objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions--have been asked to test the students' knowledge and understanding of literature. A remarkable feature observed in the question papers of this university is a large number of objective questions on literature. Most question papers have question 1 as an objective question and students are instructed to answer each of the questions in one line each. Usually such questions have 2 marks each. 27.45 % of the total number of questions asked in this university are objective questions. It has been noticed that question papers set in or before 2005 have no objective questions at all, but question papers set in or after 2006 have a large number of objective questions. This indicates a conscious shift in the paradigm followed in the testing of literature. It may be inferred on the basis of this that the Board of Studies in English of this university has now

recognized the utility and significance of objective questions in the testing of literature. The following are some examples of objective questions which test different kinds of ability on the part of students.

How many sonnets did Shakespeare write in all? To whom are they addressed? (8/1/1)

''Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shine''. Which figure of speech is used in the above poetic line? (8/1/2)

What is the name of Cupid's wife? (8/1/9)

Which flowers did Rosemary hate? (8/2/11)

It is remarkable that in the question papers set before 2005, there are hardly any short answer questions, but in the question papers set in 2006 and onwards, there are short answer questions. Most of these question papers have 10 such questions for 2 marks each. The students are instructed to write 3-4 lines each. For example,

Define alliteration with suitable example. (8/1/19)

''They also serve Him who stand and wait'' Explain the concluding line of 'On His Blindness' in your words. (8/1/21)

Comment on Vera's character. (8/2/24)

It is interesting to note that short answer questions and objective questions have the same weightage in terms of marks, irrespective of the length of the answers.

It may be observed that many of the short answer questions in these question papers are semi-objective, because there is very little difference in the length of the answer expected and the scope of short answer questions is very limited.

Every question paper has a number of essay type questions, which require very long answers on the part of students and which test their skills of composition. The percentage of essay type questions in this university is 25.21. Usually such questions have 20 marks each. For example,

‘On His Blindness’ is an expression of John Milton’s supreme faith in God. Explain. (8/3/33)

Critically analyse the plot of Merchant of Venice and focus upon the craftsmanship of Shakespeare as a playwright. (8/3/38)

Some essay type questions seem to be objective questions in their format, but, explanation and discussion are expected and 20 marks are allotted to these questions. For example,

Were the animals happy under the rule of Napoleon at the Animal Farm? (8/8/35)

Who is real the hero of the play ‘The merchant of Venice’? (8/1/35)

#### **4.4.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of questions set in this university are interrogative sentences and their percentage in the data is 46.21. For example,

What is the theme of the poem ‘Daffodils’? (8/5/14)

How is the transitory nature of human life explained in the poem "Daffodils"? (8/6/33)

Why are the priests angry with Radha, the Milkmaid? (8/1/26)

Sometimes there are two interrogative sentences in the same item. For example,

What do you understand by Restoration Age? Which poet of the Restoration Age is prescribed in your syllabus? (8/6/8)

There is an interesting example in the data of the pattern Interrogative + Interrogative + Imperative.

What is a sonnet? What are the kinds of sonnets? Explain with the help of examples. (8/5/15)

The next dominant pattern consists of imperative sentences. The percentage of such questions in the data collected from this university is 40.16. For example,

Comment on Vera's character. (8/2/24)

Describe the poet's portrait of a contended (sic) man. (8/5/17)

Discuss Eliot's *Preludes* as presenting sordid aspects of modern city life through suggestive pictures. (8/12/9)

There are variations on this basic pattern and these variations are not calculated in the percentage given above. The most frequent variation is Declarative + Imperative. For example,

Metaphysical poetry deals with uncommventional (sic) themes. Explain. (8/3/16)

Other variations on the pattern are Interrogative + Imperative or Imperative + Interrogative. For example,

Do you think that Rakesh was really a devoted son? Support your answer with the evidences from the story. (8/15/2)

Discuss Toru Dutt as a nature poet. How is he (sic) different from his western counterparts? (8/3/35)

There are two occurrences of the pattern Imperative + Imperative. For example,

Explain what is meant by the literary term *Personification*. Give examples. (8/8/30)

Another interesting example illustrates the pattern Declarative + Imperative + Interrogative.

''Shakespeare's plays have only heroines, and no heroes''. Discuss the role of Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice' in the light of above comment. Does she really dwarfs (sic) all the major male characters in the play? (8/1/36)

#### **4.4.4 The Key Words**

The most frequent key word used in the questions set by this university is 'what'. The percentage of questions beginning with 'what' is 21.08. For example,

What is Donne's view about women? (8/6/15)

The next three most frequent question key words in the data are 'how', 'why' and 'who' in the descending order of frequency. For example,

How did the Rebellion take place in 'Animal Farm'? (8/7/36)

Why is Antonio presented in a sad mood in the beginning of the play? (8/5/29)

Who calls Portia 'This mortal breathing saint'? (8/5/6)

A frequent rubric of the questions is 'Write short notes on...'

Other important key words used in the questions are 'discuss' and 'explain'. For example,

Discuss 'The Merchant of Venice' as a tragic comedy? (sic) (8/5/38)

Explain the phrases- 'Mild Yoke', "stand and stare" from Milton's sonnet 'On his blindness'? (sic) (8/5/26)

In many objective questions, the key word 'name' is used. For example,

Name the two rival pigs in '*Animal Farm*'? (sic) (8/2/13)

Another key word used many times is 'describe'. For example,

Describe Nehru's bird watching at Naini Jail. (8/2/21)

Other key words identified in the data are 'define', 'give reasons', 'summarize', 'illustrate', 'bring out', 'list' etc. For example,

List the musical instruments and their ensuing emotions as described by Dryden. (8/6/34)

Define alliteration with suitable example (sic). (8/1/19)

#### **4.4.5 What is Being Tested?**

It is noticed that all the questions set in this university test the students' memory. Only students with powerful memory can answer the questions satisfactorily. It is remarkable that all the three types of questions--objective, short answer and essay type questions-- are based on memory. Most of the objective questions are exclusively based on memory, though some of them involve other abilities as well. The following questions illustrate objective questions based entirely on memory.

What is the sacred musical instrument used by St. Cecilia? (8/1/6)

Which flowers did Rosemary hate? (8/2/11)

What is a sonnet? (8/3/1)

Some of these questions ask for a specific number, the author's name, the titles of the texts etc. Even some of the short answer questions do precisely the same. For example,

Name the poet and the poem of the following lines:

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out event (sic) to the edge of doom: (8/3/20)

Quote a few lines from any of the poems that you have read. (8/3/28)

Name the neighbouring farm and their owners. (8/4/26)

Obviously, many of the essay type questions are based exclusively on memory. For example,

Sketch the character of Rosemary Fell. (8/4/33)

How is the story "The Ant and the Grasshopper" in contrast with the original fable?  
(8/7/33)

What virtues and ideals does the poet wish for his daughter in *A Prayer for My Daughter*?  
(8/12/6)

Some of the questions also involve the ability of thinking on the part of students. They cannot be answered only on the basis of memory. For example,

*Merchant of Venice* is a play written by William Shakespeare that is both entertaining and didactic. Explain with examples. (8/3/37)

Some questions involve comprehension of a statement or a quotation. For example,

Lady Macbeth has been branded as the 'fiend-like queen' and 'the fourth witch'. Discuss her character in the light of this comment. (8/13/8)

A few questions set in this university are based on comprehension of the statement or quotation and the questions have to be answered in the light of the statement. For example,

"The Snob" is a study of how hidden conflicts affect people's lives and behaviour'. Illustrate the statement of (sic) the basis of the story 'The Snob'. (8/10/8)

Snowball reduced the seven commandments to one maxim for the benefit of the animals. What was it? (8/7/29)



There are very few questions in the data based on the students' personal response. For example,

How does Milton's poem "On His Twenty Third Birthday" inspire you? (8/1/22)

Some objective questions are based on a very close study of the text, because they ask for very narrow specific details from the text. No doubt, these questions are also based on memory. For example,

What is the sacred musical instrument used by St. Cecilia? (8/1/6)

Write *two* names of the suitors that approach to (sic) Portia for marriage. (8/1/14)

#### **4.4.6 Concluding Comments**

A remarkable feature of the questions set in Rajasthan University is that there are a very large number of objective questions and short answer questions. Some of the short answer questions verge on being objective questions. For example,

Write the names of different classes that the Lover advises the sun to chide in "Sunne Rising". (8/1/18)

On the other hand, some of the objective questions cannot be answered in one line and require a longer answer. For example,

Write the central idea of "Go and Catch a Falling Star". (8/1/5)

Another notable feature of this university is a wide option in objective and short answer questions. In many cases, students have to answer 10 questions out of 15 or 20. It has

been noticed that some questions have been repeated from one year to another. For example,

How many sonnets did Shakespeare write? To whom are they addressed? (2006, 2007, 2008)

Why do almost all of us desire to increase our income? (2005, 2006, 2008)

Some of the questions asked in this university are too general and lack in focus. It is possible for students to answer these kinds of questions on the basis of what they know about the topic. For example,

Write a short note on Blank Verse. (8/5/34)

There are found to be a large number of errors of spelling, lexis or grammar. They have been pointed out in the examples given above. It is necessary to have faultless questions in the question papers and they need to be proof-read rigorously and diligently.

## **4.5 University of Pune**

### **4.5.1 Introduction**

The University of Pune is one of the most prestigious universities in India and it is considered to have high academic standards. It was established in 1948. It has been one of the first few Indian universities to introduce language courses both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The undergraduate question papers on literature are marked by a rich variety of questions in term of the criteria selected for this study.

### **4.5.2 The Types of Questions**

All the three types of questions--objective, short answer and essay type--have been asked in the undergraduate question papers on literature in this university. It is noticed that the majority of questions asked are short answer questions. In the data there are 57% short answer questions. The short answer questions often specify the expected length of the answers in words or lines. The minimum length specified is 20 words and the maximum length specified is 'not more than 200 words'. The lines specified for each answer range between 5 and 25. Many of the short answer questions use the rubric 'Answer in brief...'. The following questions illustrate short answer questions from this university.

Write a note on Margaret as an unhappy mother. (9/1/7)

How does the poet express his idea of perfect beauty in the poem *She Walks in Beauty*? (9/15/14)

What is the central idea of the poem *Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may*? (9/1/11)

In some of the short answer questions, passages from the texts are given and students are asked to identify the passages and write paragraphs in about 25 lines each on their relevance or significance in the light of points or hints given below them. Another common rubric of short answer questions is 'Explain with reference to the context the following in about 10 lines each'. There are also a few short answer questions with the rubric 'Comment in about 10 lines on the significance of the underlined words or phrases in the following'.

The next most frequent pattern identified in the question papers is essay type questions, though its percentage is considerably low (18.89%). The following are some examples of essay type questions.

Comment on the plot structure of 'Animal Farm' (9/2/12)

Comment on Jai Nimbkar's art of characterization in 'Temporary Answers'. (9/2/20)

Describe *Pride and Prejudice* as a domestic novel. (9/3/4)

There are also objective questions based on literature and they ask for specific information about literary texts. Generally such questions have been assigned 2 marks each. For example,

Give names of the Animal Committees. (9/2/14)

What was the new name that Nwoye got? Where was he sent? (9/2/10)

Who is Mr. Collins' patroness? Where does she live? (9/3/8)

There are some questions which are objective in nature because they have a fixed answer in terms of content, but the answer is not fixed in terms of language in the sense that different phrasings are possible for the same content. Moreover, it may be possible to give more details in the answer. Due to this, they are more like short answer questions. Such questions are considered to be on the boundary line between objective questions and short answer questions. Such questions are marked as objective questions/ short answer questions in the analysis of the data. However, they are counted as short answer questions in the analysis of the data. For example,

How did Vilas help Vineeta in starting medical practice? (9/2/26)

What was celebrated at the end of the novel? How? (9/2/18)

It is interesting to note that 9/2/18 consists of two sub-questions and the first of them is an objective question, but the second one is more like a short answer question, as the answers given by different students are not exactly identical and it allows for individual expression at least to some extent. The question carries only 2 marks and that makes it more like an objective question. The following is an interesting example of an objective/short answer question.

How many parts does, according to Shakespeare, a human being act in a single play called life? (9/1/9)

Apparently, this is an objective question and the answer is expected to state some number in the answer. But the question is assigned 4 marks. This indicates that the answer is also expected to describe those parts briefly. This should have been made explicit in the phrasing of the question.

### **4.5.3 The Structure of Questions**

A majority of the questions in the data are phrased as imperative sentences and some of the most common rubrics of the questions are 'Write a note on...', 'Give a detailed character sketch of...', 'Express your views on...' and 'Identify the following passage and write a paragraph in about 25 lines on its relevance/ significance in the light of...'.

The percentage of such questions in the data is 51.14. In other words, more than half the questions from this university are imperative sentences. For example,

Write an appreciation of the poem *Mirror*. (9/1/2)

Contrast the mood at the beginning of the poem 'On his blindness' with that at the end of the poem. (9/6/5)

Define personal essay. (9/7/7)

29.96% of the questions in the data are interrogative sentences. For example,

Why did the Conjuror damage the Quick Man's things? (9/1/8)

How does the poet describe Richard Cory's life and death as seen by the people?  
(9/15/19)

What do you understand by the term 'characterisation'? (9/14/12)

There are variations on these basic patterns. The other structures of questions identified in the data are Imperative + Interrogative, Declarative + Imperative, Interrogative + Imperative etc. For example,

What is a simile? Give an example. (Interrogative + Imperative) (9/15/5)

'A man of the people' is the story of bitter rivalry between Chief Nanga and Odili.  
Discuss. (Declarative + Imperative) (9/10/18)

An interesting example in the data consists of the pattern Imperative + Interrogative + Imperative.

Define Ode. What are the types of Ode? Give an example of each. (9/12/4)

#### **4.5.4 The Key Words**

The most frequent key word in the question papers of this university is 'what'. 20.19% of the questions set by this university begin with this question word. For example,

What were the professions of Mr. and Mrs. Athavale? (9/2/23)

What did Amanda often recall? (9/5/13)

The second most frequent key word used in questions set by this university is 'how'. For example,

How do you find that Vineeta is under her mother's control? (9/2/21)

The next most frequent wh-question word is 'why' and the frequency of this is the same as that of imperative key words 'explain' and 'discuss'. For example,

Why do the newspapermen suddenly go against the doctor? (9/4/13)

Explain how fiction is an art form. (9/13/2)

Discuss the role played by Pischik in The Cherry Orchard. (9/14/16)

The next most frequent key word in the data is 'comment'. For example,

Comment on the importance of background in political satire. (9/13/5)

The other important key words and phrases in the data are 'Write a note on...', 'who', 'Give an example of ...' and 'Identify the following passages'. For example,

Who should be our role models according to Abdul Kalam? (9/8/3)

Write a note on the comic scenes in *Uncle Podger Hangs a Picture*. (9/1/10)

What is hyperbole? Give *two* examples. (9/12/5)

The other key words/phrases in the questions of this university are 'define', 'consider', 'examine', 'where', 'critically analyse', 'which', 'illustrate' etc.

#### **4.5.5 What is being Tested?**

It is observed that the most frequently tested students' ability is memory and cent per cent questions in this university are based on memory. Many questions are based exclusively on memory. For example,

What were the military decorations created by animals? Whom were they conferred on?  
(9/2/15)

In some of the questions, however, other abilities and competencies are also tested. The second most frequently tested ability is thinking. 20.84% of the questions involve students' thinking. For example,

Comment on the plot structure of 'Animal Farm'. (9/2/12)

Discuss the relations between Chris Keller and his mother as depicted by Miller in 'All My Sons'. (9/14/25)

Describe *Pride and Prejudice* as a domestic novel. (9/3/4)

The next most frequently used ability is close study of the text. 19.21% of the questions are based on this ability. Many questions ask students to identify the given passages. Though this requires memory, a very close acquaintance with the texts is also required. In



these questions, students are asked to write about the relevance or significance of the passages in the light of points or hints given below each passage. This requires both close knowledge of the text and thinking in addition to memory. There are also questions where students are asked to explain the lines given with reference to the context. Explanation of the lines and comments on them require students to think individually, but that is possible only if they know the text closely. Such questions are also based on comprehension of the extract given. In other practical questions, students are asked to comment on the significance of the underlined words or phrases or to identify poetic devices like metaphors, images, symbols and figures of speech. The following are examples of questions based on a close study.

What is the original title of Pride and Prejudice? What is the opening statement of the novel? (9/3/5)

While the first of these questions is based exclusively on memory, the second is based on both a close study of the text and memory.

Many objective questions are based on students' knowledge of minute details from the text. For example,

Which Indian national hero is mentioned in the play? And how? (9/4/10)

Name any *three* places mentioned in the play. (9/4/6)

Why does Petra refuse to translate the English story given by Hovstad? (9/4/16)

There are very few questions involving personal responses or application. For example,

Express your views on Dr. Stockmann's brave and relentless struggle against the corrupt elements of the society. (9/4/12)

Do you agree with the view that 'The Merchant of Venice' is a Romantic comedy? Discuss. (9/5/28)

"Achebe is gifted with an extraordinary sense of history, he views the great transformations in history as transformations in popular life". Critically analyse the statement with reference to 'Things Fall Apart'. (9/2/4)

There are some questions which involve comprehension of the statement made in a question. 9/2/4 quoted above illustrates this. It is not always possible to distinguish between a statement and a quotation, particularly when the statement is enclosed in quotation marks.

#### **4.5.6 Concluding Comments**

As illustrated above, this university offers a variety of objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions. It has been pointed out that sometimes short answer questions are also objective and that the boundary line between short answer questions and objective questions is fuzzy. In this university, marks assigned to a question play an important role in defining the type of question. The questions asked also test different abilities on the part of students. It is also noticed that the question papers offer a satisfactory number of options to students. It may be pointed out that some of the questions are very difficult. For example,

Critically analyse the use of symbolism in character portrayal in 'Animal Farm'. (9/2/27)

It needs to be acknowledged that there are hardly any errors in the questions asked in this university.

## **4.6 Bharati University**

### **4.6.1 Introduction**

Bharati University is one of the deemed universities in India. It is a private university. It has its headquarters in Pune and it has its branches at many other places. It was established in 1956 and since then it has made remarkable academic progress.

### **4.6.2 The Types of Questions**

A remarkable feature of this university is that there are only two types of questions set in order to test students' competence in literature--essay type questions and short answer questions. There are no objective questions at all set by this university. This probably suggests that the university does not attach much importance to specific minute details about literature and literary texts. A majority of questions asked in the question papers of this university are short answer questions. Their percentage is 77.22 and the remaining 22.78% questions are essay type questions. The most common rubric for the short answer questions is 'Write short notes on the following'. The other common rubrics for short answer questions are 'Critically appreciate ...', 'Write critical appreciation of ...' and 'Attempt an appreciation of ...'. The following are examples of topics given for short notes.

The conflict between Religion and Science as reflected in Victorian Poetry (10/1/6)

The central idea of the poem 'Under the Greenwood Tree' (10/1/20)

Characters in One- act Play (10/4/5)

Personal Essay (10/5/20)

The following are examples of short answer questions.

Why did the American lady and her daughter leave Vevey? (10/9/3)

Give a brief description of Rosemary fell (sic) and the life she led. (10/8/4)

Do you think the title 'The Rocking-Horse Winner' is apt for the story? Give reasons for your answer. (10/15/3)

It has been pointed out above that there are fewer essay type questions in this university. This suggests that very few questions test students' ability to write extended pieces of composition. In many of the question papers, the only essay type questions require students to write a critical appreciation of a poem or short story. The following are other examples of essay type questions.

How does 'Great Expectations' present the theme of development of Pip's personality? Discuss in detail. (10/10/8)

Consider *Things Fall Apart* as a story of proud clansman's tragic fall. (10/11/12)

'Hamlet's tragic death is the ultimate result of his inaction.' Discuss the plot of the play in the light of the statement. (10/13/5)

### **4.6.3 The Structure of Questions**

The dominant pattern regarding the structure of the questions set in this university is imperative sentences. The percentage of such questions in the data is 94.30. It is remarkable that question paper numbers 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, 10, 11, 10.12, 10.13 and 10.14 consist exclusively of imperative sentences. For example,

Give a brief account of the years spent by the young man in solitary confinement. (10/9/1)

Describe the turning points in Stephen's search for the artist in himself. (10/10/16)

Discuss in brief the generic characteristics of Psychological novel and Science fiction. (10/11/4)

There are very few interrogative sentences used to form questions in these question papers. The following are some examples of this pattern.

What does Yeat's (sic) mean when he says man dreads and hopes before he dies? (10/8/20)

Why did the chairman comply with reporter's advice? (10/9/4)

There are also variations on these basic patterns. The most frequent variation consists of the pattern Interrogative +Imperative. For example,

How does 'Great Expectations' present the theme of development of Pip's personality? Discuss in detail. (10/10/8)

Another variation on the pattern is the structure Declarative +Imperative. For example,

“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility” (sic) is the definition of Romantic poetry. Illustrate. (10/1/5)

In the data there is an example of the pattern Interrogative +Interrogative

What memory does Browning seem to have of the poet Shelley? What effect had Shelley had on him? (10/8/19)

It is also noticed that in the question papers set during 2005- 2007, there is not a single question in the form of an interrogative.

#### **4.6.4 The Key Words**

The most common rubric of questions in this university is 'Write short notes on the following'. 66.45% of the questions are asked under this rubric. In such types of questions, only topics for short notes should be given in the form of phrases. For example,

The central idea Alfred Tennyson's 'Flower' (sic) (10/8/17)

The ending of 'Things Fall Apart' (10/10/17)

The pride of King Lear (10/12/9)

However, it is noticed that sometimes instead of topics, interrogative sentences are given.

For example,

Write short notes on the following:

What memory does Browning seem to have of the poet Shelley? What effect had Shelley had on him? (10/8/19)

What does Yeat's (sic) mean when he says man dreads and hopes before he dies?  
(10/8/20)

The other frequent key words in the question papers are 'critical appreciation...', 'Write an appreciation of...', 'Attempt an appreciation of...', 'Write a critical appreciation of ...' and 'discuss'. For example,

'A satire towards servility and wealth is a major theme of *Great Expectations*'. Discuss.  
(10/11/8)

One of the key words used in the question papers is 'attempt'. One of the rubrics using this key word is 'Attempt the following' and this rubric needs to be followed by tasks or questions. However, there are even topics for short notes under this rubric. (See 10/7/3 below.) For example,

Attempt Any Two of the following:

- a) How was Paul's mother responsible for the tragic death of her son? (10/7/1)
- b) Sketch the characters (sic) of Johnsons'. (sic) (10/7/2)
- c) The theme of A Cup of Tea. (10/7/3)
- d) Give a description of a New York broker's office. (10/7/4)

It may be noticed that the four questions given above (a), (b), (c) and (d) are not compatible with each other. (a) is an interrogative sentence, (b) is an imperative sentence, (c) is a topic and (d) is an imperative sentence. 'Attempt' is an inappropriate key word for all of them.

The other key words used in these question papers are 'Give reasons for your answer', 'explain', 'define' and 'why'. The following questions illustrate these patterns.

Do you think the title 'The Rocking-Horse Winner' is apt for the story? Give reasons for your answer. (10/15/3)

Explain the debate in the council of Satan and his followers in *Paradise Lost* Book II. (10/12/4)

Some of the other key words occasionally used in the data are 'assess', 'describe', 'critically examine', 'comment' and 'consider'. For example,

Critically examine the theme of spiritual decay in T.S.Eliot's 'Hollow Men' and W.B.Yeats' 'Second Coming'. (10/14/4)

Substantiate your views on Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman' as a tragedy. (10/13/13)

#### **4.6.5 What is being Tested?**

It is remarkable that all the questions set in this university are based on memory. Many times they are based totally on memory and in some cases they are based partly on memory and partly on other abilities. For example,

Write a note on the three daughters of King Lear. (10/12/16)

Give a description of a New York broker's office. (10/7/4)

A few questions expect the students to use their power of thinking. Their percentage in the data is 12.97. For example,



How does 'Great Expectations' present the theme of development of Pip's personality?

Discuss in detail. (10/10/8)

Assess *The Time Machine* as a science fiction. (10/11/16)

There are a few questions based on comprehension of a statement or a quotation. For example,

'A satire towards (sic) servility and wealth is a major theme of 'Great Expectations'.

Discuss. (10/11/8)

A few questions are based on a close study of the text, because they ask for minute details from the text. For example,

Why did the American lady and her daughter leave Vevey? (10/9/3)

There are a few questions involving personal responses. For example,

Substantiate your views on Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman' as a tragedy. (10/13/13)

#### **4.6.6 Concluding Comments**

It has been pointed out above that there are no objective questions in the question papers set in this university and that all the questions are descriptive in nature. It is also mentioned above that a large majority of the questions are in the form of Imperative sentences and that there are very few Interrogative sentences. It is remarkable that in question papers set before 2007, there are no interrogatives used in the questions. It is noticed that many questions are repeated in different question papers. For example, students have been asked to write a critical appreciation of the short story 'The Bet' in

question papers of April 2005, October 2006, April 2007, October 2007 and April 2008. An identical question appears in two different question papers, as shown below.

Write a note on 'Ode' as a major lyrical type, its characteristics with the help of the Odes you have studied. (10/1/13) and (10/2/9)

It has been noticed that under topics for short notes, questions have been given and sometimes there are topics under the rubric 'Attempt the following'. Sometimes there are grammatical errors in questions. It is recommended that the rubric should have appropriate items under it and that there are no grammatical errors in the questions set

#### **4.7 A Comparison of Questions on Literature in Five Indian Universities**

The five Indian universities studied here--Sardar Patel University, Shivaji University, Rajasthan University, University of Pune and Bharati University—may be seen as representative of Indian universities in general and they give us some understanding of the types of questions set on literature in different Indian universities. It has been noticed that in all these question papers, marks assigned to each question are invariably and clearly indicated. There has been a tradition of having very long answers to literature questions and the general principle is 'the longer the answer is, the better it is'. Marks are always assigned globally to an answer and sometimes there is no transparency in the assessment of literature.

Most Indian universities have all the three types of questions on literature--essay type, short answer and objective. Among the Indian universities, Rajasthan University has the highest number of objective questions. However, it has been noticed during the analysis of the data that Sardar Patel University has very few objective questions and that Bharati

University has no objective questions at all. The objective questions in Sardar Patel University appear in only one of the question papers--History of English literature. This suggests that some universities do not assign much weightage to facts and figures related to literature and literary works and that literature is seen as a descriptive subject. It has been noticed that sometimes the distinction between short answer questions and objective questions is blurred. Such questions are objective in the sense that the answer is fixed in terms of content, but not in terms of language. For example,

Why does Elizabeth feel prejudiced against Darcy at first? (9/3/7)

Sometimes a question consists of two sub-questions and one of them is an objective question and the other one is a short answer question. For example,

Who was Governor Bellingham's sister? Why did she go to forest often? (9/3/15)

Sometimes a question is objective in form and structure, but the marks assigned to the question indicate that a long answer to the question is expected. For example,

Were the animals happy under the rule of Napoleon at the Animal Farm? (20 marks)  
(8/8/35)

It is interesting to note that all the five Indian universities have more short answer questions than essay type questions. The percentage of short answer questions ranges between 42% and 77%. Shivaji University has 41.90% short answer questions and Bharati University has 77.21% short answer questions. This makes it clear that all the five universities have fewer essay type questions. Their percentage ranges between 17 and 29. The University of Pune has the least number of essay type questions (17.41%), whereas

Sardar Patel University has the highest number of essay type questions (29.42%) . This is an interesting observation, because it has been traditionally believed that literature question papers in India mostly consist of essay type questions. But the data prove that this is not true. It is possible that a change has taken place in the weightage of essay type questions during the last 10 years or so.

As far as the structure of questions is concerned, the data reveal that in the universities except Rajasthan University, a majority of questions are worded as imperative sentences. In Rajasthan University, more questions appear as interrogative sentences. In the four universities, the percentage of imperative sentences ranges between 51 and 94. The University of Pune has 51.14 imperatives in test items, whereas Bharati University has 94.30.

It has been noticed that a majority of imperatives in Bharati University, Shivaji University and Sardar Patel University have the rubric 'Write short notes on ..'. In Rajasthan University and the University of Pune, the most frequent imperative used is 'explain'. As pointed out above, a majority of questions set in Rajasthan University are in the form of interrogative sentences and their percentage in the data is 46.21. Among the remaining universities, the number of interrogatives is highest in the University of Pune. Their percentage is 29.96 and the other three universities have smaller percentages of interrogatives.

The most frequent question word used in the four universities except Bharati University is 'what'. The most frequent question word used in Bharati University is 'how'.

It has been observed that all the questions in all the five universities are based on memory. This suggests that students with powerful memory can answer the questions in a more effective manner. Such students are able to remember and reproduce even minute details regarding the theme, characterization, symbolism, imagery etc. They also remember a number of facts and figures regarding the history of English literature. However, there are degrees of memory-dependence. Some questions are exclusively dependent on memory, whereas in other questions memory is just one of the elements and other faculties of students are also tested.

Some questions in each university involve a very close study of literary texts. Such questions require knowledge of minute and sometimes even unimportant details about literary texts. It is observed that the number of such questions is highest in the University of Pune.

Some questions are based on statements or quotations. Important abilities tested in such questions are comprehension, interpretation and sometimes application of literary terms or categories to the literary texts mentioned. In most universities there are questions asking students to explain the given literary passages with reference to the context or to identify something from literary extracts and comment on it. The number of such questions is highest in Rajasthan University.

A very important ability that should be tested in any subject is the students' ability to think independently and critically. If students do not develop this ability, they depend entirely on the views and opinions of teachers and critics. Ideally, students should be able to substantiate, argue for or against a point of view, arrive at a balanced conclusion and be

able to critically appreciate texts. The number of such questions is highest in Sardar Patel University.

Each university has a few questions based on students' personal responses. In such questions, students are invited to express their personal views or opinions and justify them. Sometimes students are asked to imagine the effect of something different from what is given in the text. The number of such questions is very small in each university studied here. However, it is highest in the University of Pune.

These observations give us a reasonably reliable picture of testing of literature in the five universities selected for this study. It is hoped that this offers a fairly representative description of the phenomenon in most Indian universities.

#### **4.8 Indian Teachers' Views on the Teaching and Testing of Literature**

The Indian teachers whose views about the teaching and testing of literature were collected through questionnaires had an average teaching experience of 17.6 years. 60% teachers claim that they use English exclusively in their classrooms while teaching. Most other teachers seem to use English for most of the class time. The teachers who use students' L1 or the regional language use it generally for explaining meanings of unknown words. Some of them use it for increasing students' confidence and for having better interaction with them. One of the teachers uses it only in the initial stages.

All the teachers use lecturing as the technique of teaching, but almost all the teachers occasionally use other techniques as well. About 50% teachers make use of audio-visual aids like films and power point presentations. Most of them also use discussions,

students' presentations and questions and answers and they try to have some interaction in the classroom. A few of them also use role play and group work.

It is interesting to note that only 20% teachers have had some training in testing and evaluation. No doubt, a number of seminars and workshops are organised for teachers every year. A few of them deal with issues related to teaching, but workshops related to testing and evaluation are hardly conducted. This indicates that about 80% teachers have had no formal training in setting questions and techniques of the assessment of answers.

In the absence of workshops on testing, it becomes necessary for teachers to show the questions set by them to colleagues and get their feedback. About 40% teachers seem to consult their colleagues to find out whether the questions set by them are clear and to ensure that the questions are not too easy or too difficult. One of the teachers shows them only to the Head of the Department. Some teachers point out that they do not show questions to colleagues to maintain confidentiality of the questions.

As far as the types of questions for testing literature are concerned, 40% teachers believe that all the three types of questions--essay type, short answer and objective--should be used for testing students' knowledge of literature, as they serve different purposes. 30% teachers think that only essay type questions and short answer questions are suitable for testing literature and that there should be no objective questions in literature testing. One of the teachers feels that only short answer questions need to be used in literature testing. Another teacher feels that objective questions are useful in teaching of literature, but they should not be used in testing.

90% teachers think that there should not be only objective questions in the testing of literature. Most of them feel that having only objective questions in literature testing is undesirable, because they can test only students' memory and they cannot test students' writing skills and creative abilities. Only one of the teachers believes that it is all right to have objective questions exclusively in literature testing, because they can test close reading of the texts on the part of students and this prevents them from making sweeping generalizations about literature.

Teachers were asked to specify the criteria used for evaluation of students' answers. They were asked to point out the factors that they took into account while deciding upon the marks to be awarded to an answer. Most of the teachers attach the greatest importance to the content of the answer, i.e. the points covered. They also give prime importance to grammatical accuracy and correctness. They also pay attention to the choice of appropriate vocabulary. Half of the teachers also attach some value to the organization of the answer. The other criteria specified by the teachers are relevance of the answer, the use of quotations from literary texts and originality of responses.

About 40% teachers are satisfied with the current practices of setting of the questions and evaluation of the answers. 30% teachers are totally dissatisfied with these practices. The others are partly satisfied with them. Many teachers are satisfied with the questions asked, but not with the practices of assessment. According to most of them, questions test only the students' memory and not their creative abilities. One of the teachers suggests that there should be oral tests for literature. Some of the teachers suggest that question papers should be set by experienced teachers and experts and questions should not be repeated.



The questionnaire asked for teachers' suggestions to bring about qualitative improvement in the questions set and the assessment of the answer books. Many teachers suggest that there should be more challenging questions with clear focus which test students' close reading of the texts and their ability to give original responses. They also suggest that there should be a proper balance among the three types of questions--essay type, short answer and objective. Some of them suggest that there should be questions involving practical analysis of unseen passages. Most teachers suggest that there should be componential marking of literature answers and that paper setting should be done only by experienced teachers. Some teachers suggest that there should be workshops to train teachers in setting questions and evaluation.

#### **4.9 Indian Students' Views on the Teaching and Testing of Literature**

The Indian students whose views were sought through the questionnaire about the teaching and testing of English literature in India all like to study English literature. Most of them think that it gives them a better understanding of human beings and life. Some of them consider literature to be a rich subject and derive a lot of pleasure by studying it. It is heartening to note that most of the students give importance to reading of texts. They think that this gives them a better understanding of literature. Only a few students depend on notes and other books for information about literature.

Students were asked to point out whether their teachers taught English literature through English or the mother tongue. 70% students point out that their teachers teach English literature only through English. In other cases, they sometimes use the mother tongue mainly to explain difficult concepts.

Students were asked to point out whether they always read every word in the question carefully before answering it. All the students claim that they always read questions carefully before answering them because it helps them to understand questions better, identify key words and plan their answers effectively.

The questionnaire asked students whether they preferred to have objective questions or descriptive questions on literature. About half of the students point out that they prefer to have both the types of questions. Some of them would like to have only descriptive questions, because that gives them an opportunity to express their personal views. Some of them prefer to have only objective questions, because they find them easy and they think that they can score more marks.

Students were asked to specify the techniques used by their teachers in the classroom for teaching literature. 20% of the students point out that their teachers use only or mainly lecturing as a technique in the classroom. Other points out that in addition to lecturing, their teachers occasionally use techniques like showing CDs, films and power point presentations. Some of the teachers encourage students to participate in discussions or make presentations.

Students were asked whether different teachers awarded them the same or different marks for the same answers. Most of the students think that there are differences in the assessment made by different teachers. Some of them point out that this is due to the teachers' different points of view and the subjective element of literature. Only a few students think that there is no remarkable difference between the assessments of their answers made by different teachers.

Students were also asked to point out whether they understood why they got a certain number of marks. About half the students are able to understand this, while the others are not able to do so. Some of the latter types of students also mention that the marks they receive are below their expectations.

Students were asked whether they consulted their teachers regarding the improvement of their performance. The responses to the questionnaire indicate that most of the students do not consult their teachers about this, but when they do that, sometimes they get a positive response and useful advice from them. Many students point out that they never consult their teachers due to their negative attitude.

The last question in the questionnaire asks for students' suggestions for improvement in the teaching of literature in the class and examinations in literature. Most of the students have nothing to suggest and they think that they are not qualified enough to make any such suggestions. A few students suggest that competent teachers should be appointed to teach literature and that there should be a critical scrutiny of questions set in examination question papers

## **CHAPTER V**

# **A COMPARISON OF QUESTIONS ON ENGLISH LITERATURE IN IRAQI AND INDIAN UNIVERSITIES**

### **5.1 Introductory Remarks**

This is probably the first full-scale study of the testing of literature in two culturally and linguistically diverse countries--Iraq and India. The study is interesting and potentially instructive in that it examines the testing of literature in EFL and ESL situations. Of course, the two countries have widely different experiences of colonization and exposure to English. India has many more major languages than Iraq and an average Indian is a multilingual, whereas an average Iraqi is either a monolingual or bilingual. The British ruled over Iraq for very few years and English in Iraq is not at all a part of the British legacy. Due to a relatively much longer rule of the British in India, Indians have been exposed to English for centuries and English in India is very much a part of the colonial legacy. Indians not only welcomed and accepted English, but they also assimilated it and made it their own language. English is used for very limited purposes as a foreign language in Iraq, but in India it is used extensively as a second language in both formal and informal contexts. Due to the Indians' identification with English, a distinct variety of English (i.e. General Indian English) has emerged and established itself. Indian English may be considered a major non-native variety of English. Some linguists have even made a plea for considering Indian English a native variety of English and Rajendra Singh ( )

has put forth strong arguments in favour of modifying the criteria for deciding the status of languages as native or non-native.

India has had a long history of teaching of English literature, while Iraq has a shorter history of the same. As the status of English is different in the two countries, there are obviously differences in the aims and objectives and methodology of teaching literature. The present study is inspired by the assumption that there must be differences in the testing of literature in the two countries. However, it is also thought that there may be some 'universals' of the testing of literature. Therefore, it makes an effort to identify and describe objectively the similarities and differences between the two situations.

Since no similar studies are available, it was not possible to have recourse to criteria for comparison which have been used by other researchers. The various criteria used for analysis and comparison in the present study have evolved from a close scrutiny of question papers from different universities in the two countries and the researcher's first-hand experience of studying in the two countries.

## **5.2 The Format of Question Papers**

This section pays attention to the format used in setting question papers on literature in the two countries and concentrates on aspects like instructions to students, marks allotted to questions, number of questions asked and the number of choices available to students.

### **a) The Identity of the Paper Setter and Examiner**

It is remarkable that every Iraqi question paper carries the names of paper setters and examiners and in some cases even of the Heads of the Departments. In almost all the

cases, question papers are signed by them. This indicates that the teacher of a course is also the examiner and it assigns responsibility for the question paper to particular individuals. This also gives a personal touch to the question paper. This means that each question paper is meant only for a particular college.

In India, due to mass education, usually the university prepares question papers common to all its constituent and affiliated colleges and a teacher does not generally examine only his students. Therefore, names of paper setters and examiners are never revealed in question papers. In fact, every attempt is made to keep these names confidential. This suggests that question papers are based on the syllabi and not on what individual teachers have taught. Considering the fact that in Iraq there are no external students and every student must attend classes in order to appear for an examination, each question paper is set for a limited number of students. However, in almost all Indian universities, there are external students who never attend a college but directly appear for an examination. The question papers for regular and external students are the same and each question paper is meant for a very large number of students. In India, an attempt is made to ensure objectivity and fairness to all the students. The difference is also due to the fact that in Iraq there is only one examiner for a particular course, whereas in India a large number of examiners assess students' answer books in the same course.

### **b) Wishing Good Luck to Students**

It is found that every Iraqi question paper wishes 'Good Luck' to students at the end. This might make students more comfortable and because the students and the examiner know each other personally, this creates a cordial atmosphere during the examination. Indian

question papers do not have this expression of cordiality, because the examination is considered a very formal occasion and students do not even know who the examiner is.

### **c) Instructions at the Beginning of the Question Paper**

Most Iraqi and Indian universities indicate through instructions to examinees given at the top how many questions are to be answered and the options available among questions. All the Indian universities indicate totals marks for the question paper, but many Iraqi question papers do not indicate this. The instructions given in Indian universities are fairly stereotypical and in a particular university they are repeated verbatim from one year to another. Question papers of Sardar Patel University generally ask students to clearly mention the option attempted. The instructions given at the beginning of some question papers in the University of Basrah are different from those given in other Iraqi universities. One of the common instructions is ‘Avoid language ERRORS and IRRELEVANCY’. Other instructions in this university are ‘Be brief and to the point’, ‘Write plain correct language’, ‘Grammatical and spelling errors will not be tolerated’ and ‘Avoid improvisation in writing’. In one of the question papers of Basrah University, students are asked to rewrite the question before answering it.

### **d) Marks Allotted to Individual Questions and the Question Paper**

All the five Indian universities clearly and unambiguously indicate the marks allotted to each question and the question paper as a whole. However, in some Iraqi question papers marks allotted to either individual questions or the question paper as a whole are not indicated. In the Iraqi universities, marks are sometimes explicitly stated and sometimes they are not. In some cases, there is no consistency even within the same university. Some

Iraqi question papers assign fractional marks to questions. It is desirable that the marks are indicated for each question clearly.

### **e) The Length of the Expected Answers**

In question papers of Indian universities, the length of the expected answers is not indicated in words or lines. However, there are indirect suggestions regarding the length of the answer e.g. 'Write short notes on the following' and 'Explain in details'. As indicated in (c) above, some Iraqi question papers ask students to be brief and to the point. In some of the Iraqi question papers, the number of words expected for each answer is mentioned. In question paper 3.8 set by the University of Salahaddin, it is indicated that each question is to be answered in 160 words, but marks are not indicated at all in the question paper.

### **f) The Total Number of Questions in a Question Paper and Choices**

#### **Available**

It is noticed in general that Indian question papers have a larger number of total questions in a question paper than Iraqi question papers. Similarly, the options between questions given to students in Indian universities are greater in number than those in Iraqi universities. It may be pointed out that in many question papers in Rajasthan University there are between 35 and 40 questions in all, while in some question papers of the University of Salahaddin the total number of questions in the question paper is 3 and there are no options at all. As a result, students have to answer all the three questions. The large number of questions in Rajasthan University is obviously because of objective



questions. In paper number 8.1 set by Rajasthan University, students have to answer 23 questions out of 37. This indicates that there is a considerable amount of choice for students. In this question paper, they are required to answer 20 out of 30 objective questions and for each essay type question there is at least 50% choice. The smallest total number of questions in an Indian university is 14.

### **5.3 The Types of Questions**

In both Iraqi and Indian universities, all the three types of questions--essay type, short answer and objective--have been asked. It is observed that a majority of questions in the Iraqi universities are essay type questions, whereas a majority of questions in the Indian universities are short answer questions. The highest percentage of essay type questions is 79.50 in the University of Basrah, whereas the highest percentage of essay type questions in India is found to be 29.42 in Sardar Patel University. A majority of questions in Indian universities are short answer questions. Bharati University has the highest number of short answer questions among the Indian universities. This perhaps indicates that Iraqi universities give greater importance to global understanding of literary texts and issues and Indian universities attach greater importance to specific details about literary texts and issues and expect concise answers. However, it is interesting to note that the expectations regarding the length of answers in the two countries are different. The responses to short answer questions in India are often longer than those to essay type questions in Iraq. This is because of different conventions regarding the length of answers in the two countries. Many Iraqi question papers specify the number of words for essay type questions. For example, the University of Salahaddin has specified '160 words' as the expected length for answers to essay type questions. In India, the responses to short

answer questions may be longer than this and essay type questions are expected to be answered in about 400 words.

It has been observed that the weightage given to objective questions by ten universities under consideration shows a lot of variation. There are objective questions in all the Iraqi universities, but their number in each university is very small. The highest percentage of objective questions in Iraqi universities is 17.64 in Diyala University. This also means that many question papers in these universities have no objective questions at all. Among the Indian universities, Rajasthan University has the highest number of objective questions. The percentage of objective questions in this university is 27.45. It is interesting to note that in this university there are no objective questions in the question papers set in or before 2005 and question papers set in or after 2006 have a large number of objective questions. This indicates a conscious shift in the paradigm followed in literature testing in this university. It may be inferred from this that the Board of Studies in this university now recognizes the validity and utility of objective questions in assessing students' knowledge of and about literature. It is noticed that Sardar Patel University has very few objective questions and that Bharati University does not have a single objective question. It is noticed that multiple choice questions are not generally used in the testing of literature. In the data analysed, no Iraqi university is found to use them. Among the Indian universities, only Shivaji University is found to make use of them. This suggests that all the Iraqi universities and a few Indian universities do not attach much importance to the type of information about literature and literary texts which can best be tested through objective questions, e.g. the authors' names, the titles of the texts, the contexts for particular extracts and other facts and figures relating to

literature. Only a few types of objective questions seem to be preferred by the universities under study. They are wh-questions, imperatives and filling in the blanks with or without alternatives. In addition to these three common types, Sardar Patel University has a question on matching the items and Shivaji University has a question involving the removal of odd items. Almost all the universities in both the countries seem to believe that literary competence can better be tested through extended answers. Such questions test a range of skills--organizing and co-coordinating the material, presentation, putting forward arguments convincingly and supporting them, offering a personal response and writing in faultless and chaste English. These integrative skills seem to be emphasized in the teaching and testing of literature. It suggests that a question paper should have a justifiable balance between objective and long answer questions. It is hoped that objective questions will be used more efficiently and effectively in literature testing.

In the universities from both the countries, it is found that sometimes the distinction among the three types of questions is not clearly and overtly made. A question may appear to be an objective question from its phrasing, but marks allotted to the question and sometimes its juxtaposition with other long answer questions indicate that it is either a short answer question or an essay type question. For example,

Who should be our role models according to Abdul Kalam? (9/8/3)

How many times did Vera lie in "The Open Window"? (1/6/7)

#### **5.4 The Structure of Questions**

It is interesting to note that in nine of the ten universities examined in this study, a majority of questions are worded as imperative sentences. Only in Rajasthan University, a

majority of questions are in the form of interrogative sentences. The highest percentage of imperatives is found in Bharati University (94.30%). The lowest percentage of such questions among the Indian universities is 51.14. Interestingly, this is close to the highest percentage of such questions among Iraqi universities, i.e. Diyala University (56.61%). In all the ten universities, various possibilities of combining the two major structures i.e. imperatives and interrogatives, are found. The following are examples of questions combining the two structures from the two countries

How could you account for Jane's trials at both Gateshead and Lowood. (sic) Discuss in detail. (5/18/1)

Do you agree with view that "The Merchant of Venice" is a Romantic Comedy? Discuss. (10/5/28)

In both the countries, there are test items combining declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives together. For example,

A critique of its own culture, T.S.Eliot's "The Waste-Land", through its various fragments, reveals modern man's dilemma of living in dryness and aridity. Agree or disagree? Justify. (5/4/3)

The central idea of the play "The Bear" is that human mind is unpredictable. How far do you agree with this statement. (sic) Offer your comments. (6/8/17)

In both the countries, there are questions combining a number of interrogatives or imperatives together. For example,

*Paradise Lost* is a poem written by John Milton. What is its form? How many Books does it consist of? What is its subject matter? Write down at least five lines to be taken from its first Book. (1/14/7)

What is a sonnet? What are the kinds of sonnets? Explain with the help of examples. (8/5/15)

### **5.5 The Key Words**

The key words used in test items are significant in that they specify the tasks allotted to students and reflect paper setters' expectations about the answers. Concentration on key words helps in deciding the degree of relevance of answers to the questions asked. It has already been pointed out above that in most of the ten universities analysed in this study, the structure 'imperative' is the most dominant structure. It is noticed that in all the five Indian universities, one of the common rubrics is 'Write short notes on the following ...'. Variations on this are 'Write a detailed note on ...', 'Write a critical note on ...' and 'Write a note on ...'. In three of the Indian universities--Bharati University, Sardar Patel University and Shivaji University--this is the most frequent rubric used. Interestingly, this rubric is not used commonly in any of the five Iraqi universities and its occurrence is rather rare. In three of the Iraqi universities--Basrah University, Salahaddin University and Diyala University--the most frequently used command word is 'discuss'. In the remaining two Iraqi universities--Baghdad University and Tikrit University--the most commonly used command word is 'comment'. It is found that in the university of Pune and Rajasthan University, the two most frequent command words are 'discuss' and 'explain'. Incidentally, 'explain' is used as a command word in almost all the universities

both in India and Iraq as well. Only Shivaji University makes a minimal use of these command words, because the most frequent rubric in Shivaji University is ‘Write short notes on ...’. Only Basrah University has a frequent use of the rubric ‘Critically appreciate ...’ and ‘Write a critical appreciation of ...’. This rubric is rare in other universities. The other command words used commonly in Iraqi universities are ‘identify’, ‘define’, ‘mention’ and ‘illustrate’, but these are not frequently used in Indian universities.

In Rajasthan University, the structure ‘interrogative’ is the most frequently used structure. However, it is also a common structure in all the other universities. It is interesting to note that in nine of the ten universities analysed here, ‘what’ is the most frequent question word. This indicates that the answer should contain a detailed description of the topic under question and also probably an explanation for that description. Only in Basrah University, the most frequent question word is ‘how’. It is noticed that in eight of the ten universities in which ‘what’ is the most frequent question word, the second most frequent question word is ‘how’. In Baghdad University, ‘how’ is the third most frequent question word after ‘what’ and ‘why’. This suggests that for all the ten universities, ‘how’ is a very important question word and it gives importance to the manner in which a certain effect is achieved in literature and it perhaps also expects students to justify the argument made. Only in Sardar Patel University, the question word ‘which’ is used as frequently as ‘how’. The foregoing observations make it clear that there are widespread similarities among the ten universities as far as the command words and question words are concerned.

Some of the rarely used command words in these universities are ‘state’, ‘trace’, ‘examine’, ‘argue’, ‘compare and contrast’, ‘mention’, ‘analyse’, ‘give’, ‘name’, ‘write a

character sketch', 'refer', 'point out', 'summarize', 'highlight', 'substantiate' and 'assess'. Some of the least frequently used question words are 'who', 'do you agree', 'agree or disagree', 'when', 'where', 'how much', 'how far', 'how many' and 'to what extent'.

An odd feature has been noticed in a few questions set by Tikrit University and the University of Salahaddin. These test items have command words like 'talk' and 'speak'. For example,

Speak about the nature of the relationships among the different families in Hard Times.  
(3/8/2)

Talk about the symbolism in "Cat in the Rain". (4/12/11)

The command words are inappropriate in a written test in which students are expected not to speak or talk. This is the influence of Arabic on English, because in Iraqi question papers in Arabic, the equivalents of 'talk' and 'speak' are commonly used even in a written test. However, this is unacceptable in English.

## **5.6 What is being Tested?**

It has been observed that the questions set in all the ten Indian and Iraqi universities are based on memory at least to some extent. Of course, there are differences among the questions relating to the weightage attached to memory. Some of the answers are totally memory-dependent, whereas some questions involve other abilities and skills in addition to memory. For example, objective questions depend most of the times exclusively on memory. For example,

Write *two* names of the suitors that approach to Portia for marriage. (8/1/14)

Who is the poet? (2/7/3)

In the following questions, memory plays only a partial role

How does 'Great Expectations' present the theme of development of Pip's personality?

Discuss in detail. (10/10/8)

Discuss the following statement: "The novel Jane Eyre is full of tragic scenes that change the characters (sic) thoughts and actions". (5/2/4)

There is no doubt that memory plays a crucial role in the study of any subject and therefore, it is of vital importance in the study of literature as well. There are a lot of details in literary texts and about literary texts which need to be remembered precisely. This is particularly important in examinations which are not open-book examinations. In an open-book examination, there would be less strain on memory and rote-learning and other faculties like thinking would be given greater importance. However, there are certain aspects of literary studies which need to be remembered. Definitions need to be remembered or learnt by heart, because the precise words in definitions are very significant and their synonyms or near-synonyms cannot be used. It is also important to remember details of chronology in the history of literature and years of publication, relationships among characters and important issues from literary texts and criticism. Students are expected to give a number of quotations to show their first-hand acquaintance with literary texts and they are also expected to indicate their familiarity with critical material.



If students depend entirely on memory to answer questions on literature, they tend to write stock answers in a mechanical way. Many times they do not even read the questions carefully. As a result, their answers can be partially or totally irrelevant. Therefore, it is suggested that even if memory is a highly useful ability in the study of literature, over dependence on it should be avoided and it needs to be used in relation to only certain aspects of literary studies. It is recommended that memory should be generally used in conjunction with other abilities and skills.

An important ability in the testing of literature is the students' ability for comprehension and interpretation. In many questions, literary extracts are reproduced and students are asked to explain them with reference to the context or analyse some of their aspects. In such situations, students must be able to interpret and comprehend literary passages. This is based on the students' lexical and grammatical resources and knowledge of literary texts. Some questions involve a statement made about an author or a text and students are asked to discuss or comment on it. Sometimes there are quotations from literary criticism and students are asked to explain or discuss them. In all such cases, the skills of comprehension and interpretation play a vital role. For example,

“The Chimney Sweeper forcefully brings out Blake’s deep sense of outrage at the wretched condition of Chimney Sweepers”. Discuss. (9/12/9)

In *Sons and Lovers* the Morel children suffer from the familial problems of their parents. Discuss these problems showing who is responsible for them. (4/15/1)

Among the Iraqi universities, the universities of Tikrit, Baghdad and Basra have a relatively high number of such questions. Among the Indian universities, the University

of Pune and Shardar Patel University have a relatively high number of such questions. It is interesting to note that Bharati University has very few such questions. This is probably due to the fact that the most common rubric in this university is 'Write short notes on ...', as pointed out earlier.

The ability to think independently and critically is important as far as the testing of literature is concerned. Of course, this thinking is closely dependent on a close study of the texts, memory and the abilities of comprehension and interpretation. Literature evokes different reactions and responses in the minds of individual readers and prompts them to think in different ways. This depends to a large extent on students' intensive and extensive reading. Students should be able to express clearly their ways of thinking and explain and justify them in the light of textual evidence. For example,

Critically examine the theme of spiritual decay in T.S.Eliot's 'Hollow Men' and W.B.Yeats' 'Second Coming'. (10/14/4)

Comment on Joyce's attitude towards the Irish educational system as shown through Stephen's school experience. (3/7/4)

Personal response questions are significant in the testing of literature. It is difficult to plot the boundary line between questions based on thinking and those involving personal responses. In personal response questions, there is greater freedom for the students' personality to be reflected in the answers. Typically such questions do not have right or wrong answers and the student is free to express his individual point of view. Such answers can bring out the individual unique response shaped by his experience of life and literature. It is certainly important for the students to articulate their responses clearly and

consistently and substantiate them. The importance of such questions in the testing of literature cannot be overstated. For example,

Express your views on Dr. Stockmann's brave and relentless struggle against the corrupt elements of society. (9/4/12)

What theme do you suggest for Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers"? (2/8/4)

The number of such questions in all the ten universities is low. Among the Iraqi universities, the University of Basrah and Baghdad have relatively more personal response questions than other universities. Among the Indian universities, Sardar Patel University and the University of Pune have a relatively greater number of such questions. It is recommended that more such questions should be incorporated by all universities in the testing of literature, if one of the aims of teaching literature is to enhance the student's capacity for self-expression.

## **5.7 Concluding Remarks**

This comparative study of literature question papers reveals a number of interesting aspects of the testing of literature in ESL and EFL situations. It has been noticed that in all these universities, some of the questions asked have been too general and they lack in focus. That is, they do not indicate any particular aspects of the texts to be discussed and they do not offer students a sense of direction. Students can write almost anything in relation to the texts or authors mentioned. For example,

Write a short note on Death, Be Not Proud. (7/13/23)

Write a short essay on the THREE GENIUSES of English Literature. Provide examples when necessary. (3/5/6)

It is suggested that the questions should be more specific and on narrower topics. This would enable examiners to check students' first-hand acquaintance with literary texts.

As pointed out earlier, all the Iraqi universities and some of the Indian universities use objective questions in order to test the students' knowledge of literature. Most of these universities have very few objective questions. Objective questions play an important role in checking whether the students have got the basic facts about literature and literary texts right and whether they have studied the texts closely and carefully. It is suggested that objective questions should be used to a greater extent not only to test the students' memory but also to test students' critical and analytical skills. For example, students can be asked to identify figures of speech or other special uses of language in the lines given or to point out features of characterization highlighted by particular quotations. In other words, objective questions should be used more for testing the students' knowledge of literature and not so much his knowledge about literature.

In some of the question papers inappropriate command words or question words have been used. This is found particularly in some Iraqi universities. For example,

Define and explain the plot of "The Open Window". (4/2/8)

The plot of a literary work cannot be defined. A more appropriate instruction would be 'Explain/ Analyse the plot structure of "The Open Window".'

Define the following.

William Langland, Handlyne Synne, Domesday Book, Ancrene Riwe and Monmouth.

(2/4/1)

The items given for definition in this question cannot be defined precisely. In some of the Iraqi question papers, verbs like ‘talk’ and ‘speak’ are used even when students are expected to write their answers. For example,

Talk about the symbolism in “Cat in the Rain”. (4/12/11)

It has been mentioned above that this feature is related to the interference of Arabic with English.

Sometimes there is a personal reference to the paper setter in the question and this is inappropriate. For example,

Give me a brief explanation of “Tithonus”. (4/9/6)

It has been noticed that in question papers from almost all the ten universities, there are errors of syntax, lexis, spelling and punctuation. For example,

Who is the name of the poet? (2/11/6)

What about the symbolism and the theme of “Cat in the Rain”? (4/2/6)

“Christy is a very ambitious character” do you agree with this statement? Give your reasons. (6/10/16)

It is claimed that Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel is considered as one of the greatest political satires in English literature. Justify the validity of this claim. (5/21/3)

The only university which has hardly any errors is the University of Pune. It is necessary that all the questions set in university examinations are free from errors of any type. This will indicate to students how much value universities attach to correctness and appropriateness in the framing of questions. It is suggested that reviewing and proof-reading of questions should be done rigorously and meticulously.

It has been noticed that in some universities, there has been a tendency to repeat the questions and therefore, identical questions appear in different question papers. It is suggested that there should be greater variety in the formulation of literature questions.

Literature questions need to be reviewed in the light of the aims and objectives of teaching literature in the two countries. Questions should test the quality and quantity of the students' literary competence. From this point of view, there should be more questions based on critical thinking, analysis and personal responses. It is hoped that this study will initiate a debate about the qualitative improvement of literature questions and that teachers and students will have a more fruitful role to play in the appreciation of literature.

### **5.8 Innovative Questions on Literature**

In order to bring about a radical change in the testing of literature, more innovative questions should be thought of and used. Ideas about innovative questions can be developed through individual and collective thinking, discussion and debate, study of question papers of different universities in the world and samples of questions given in books and journals. Innovative questions will reduce the monotony and predictability of literature questions and will make students more 'active' in the study of literature.

It is desirable to give extracts from literary texts in the question paper and ask very specific questions based on them. This will reduce the dependence on memory and prompt the students to struggle with the texts and think independently. For example, in the first stanza of the poem 'The Solitary Reaper' by William Wordsworth, there are seven words meaning 'lonely' or 'alone'. Students can be asked to identify the seven words and comment on the effect produced by the repetition of the idea of loneliness. The poem has four stanzas and each stanza deals with a different aspect of the theme. Students may be asked to specify what each stanza is about and how the four aspects of the theme are related to one another. This will make them aware of the progression within the poem from one stanza to another. Similarly, they can be asked to explain the figures of speech by pointing out similarities between the two objects compared to each other.

A passage from a novel or play can be reproduced in the question papers and the following types of questions may be asked.

How are different characters in the passage dressed?

What details of their physical appearance are given in the play?

What are the different actions mentioned in the passage?

Draw a character-sketch of X in the light of the passage.

Comment on the use of imagery used in the passage.

Such questions will increase the degree of the students' involvement with literary texts and drastically reduce their dependence on memory.

Most courses on English literature involve a critical analysis of and commentary on literary texts. The study of English literature does not generally include creative writing in English. In some universities in the world, creative writing is treated as an independent subject. However, in some universities, components of creative writing are treated as parts of literature courses. If creative writing and the study of literature are merged into one course, students will be able to not only passively appreciate literature but also to try their hand at composing literary texts. This will give them some insight into the analysis of literature. Some innovative questions on literature may be thought of along these lines. For example, using short and simple poems, students can be given the first two stanzas of a poem and can be asked to compose the third and last stanza of the poem. This will open up many creative possibilities for students. They can learn a lot by comparing different students' versions and also by comparing them with the original texts. It has been experienced that with a little encouragement and training, even average students are able to construct reasonably effective pieces of literature.

A similar type of exercise may be devised with reference to a novel, short story or one-act play. The students may be given a short story without the last one or two paragraphs and students may be asked to supply them. A more challenging task would be to ask students to write the first one or two paragraphs on the basis of the rest of the short story given to them. In case of drama, a similar kind of exercise may be designed. Alternatively, students may be given dialogues with some missing sentences and they may be asked to construct the missing dialogues.



In order to test whether the students understand the structure of a short story, students may be given different sections of a short story in a jumbled order and they may be asked to decide upon the order of these sections and justify their sequencing.

These are only rare random examples of innovative questions in question papers at present. Of course, such questions assume that the teacher has a lot of freedom to set questions which appeal to students' imagination and bring out the best within them.

### **5.9 A Comparison of Iraqi and Indian Teachers' Views on the Teaching and Testing of Literature**

It is remarkable that all the Iraqi and Indian teachers love the teaching of literature. They believe that literature gives us richer understanding of life and aesthetic pleasure. They seem to value creativity of literature. A slightly greater percentage of Indian teachers use English exclusively in the teaching of literature than Iraqi teachers and this provides excellent exposure to students to English. About half the teachers in both the countries use English along with the students' native language and students' L1 is used for explaining difficult words and concepts and to create confidence in them particularly in the initial stages.

All the Iraqi and Indian teachers use lecturing as a major technique of teaching. However, most of them supplement it by a reasonable use of other techniques. Most of them use question-answers and have some amount of interaction with students. The percentage of teachers who use audio-visual aids and power point presentation is 50 in India and 30 in Iraq.

It is interesting to note that only 20% Indian teachers have had some formal training in the formulation of questions and assessment, whereas the percentage of such teachers in Iraq is 50. This indicates that even if a large number of teacher training programmes are held in India, testing and evaluation are usually the neglected areas in these programmes. In both the countries, about half the teachers consult their colleagues to get feedback on the questions set by them. More Iraqi teachers seem to believe that each teacher has his own distinctive style of setting questions and therefore, consulting other teachers is not necessary.

In both the countries, 90% of the teachers strongly believe that there must not be only objective questions in the testing of literature. They prefer to have a judicious combination of objective and descriptive questions. 30% of Indian teachers think that essay type and short answer questions are more suitable for testing literature and 30% of Iraqi teachers think that essay type questions are most appropriate for this purpose. This suggests that Indian teachers are perhaps more aware of the usefulness of short answer questions. Most teachers both in Iraq and India believe that all the three types of questions--essay type, short answer and objective--should be exploited in the right proportion in the testing of literature.

The criteria used in marking in both the countries are found to be similar. In both the countries, the greatest importance is attached to the content of the answer and its relevance to the question. In both the countries the correctness of grammar and appropriateness of vocabulary are considered to be very important. About 40% teachers in India and 30% teachers in Iraq are generally satisfied with the current practices of question formulation and assessment of answers. 30% of Indian teachers and 20% of Iraqi

teachers are totally dissatisfied with them. Some Indian teachers are satisfied with the questions asked, but not with the methods of assessment. Teachers in both the countries suggest that questions testing the students' literary competence should be set and repetition of questions should be avoided.

Teachers in both the countries feel the need for qualitative improvement in the setting of questions and assessment. They are aware of the fact that the students' literary competence and not just their memory should be tested in examinations. Both the groups suggest that questions should be set by experienced teachers. Many Indian teachers suggest that there should be componential marking of answers. Only some Indian teachers argue for the need to have questions on literature involving practical analysis of literature passages.

The comparison of Iraqi and Indian teachers' views presented above brings out the fact that the basic concerns of Iraqi and Indian teachers of literature and the problems faced by them and possible solutions are basically the same. In some cases there is a difference of degree, but not of kind. An interesting inference to be drawn is that in ESL and EFL situations, there are probably no fundamental differences as far as the teaching and testing of literature are concerned.

### **5.10 A Comparison of Iraqi and Indian Students' Views on the Teaching and Testing of Literature**

All the Iraqi and Indian students whose views were elicited to the questionnaire like to study English literature. This indicates that they are sufficiently motivated to study English literature and that their attitudes to the study of literature are positive. Many of

them consider literature to be a rich subject and it gives them an understanding of human life and social problems. It also gives some of them pleasure. Some of them think that a study of literature helps them to refine and develop their language skills.

Most of the Indian students give importance to the reading of literature texts, but only 30% Iraqi students make it a point to read them. Reading of literature texts gives them a better understanding of literature. The students who do not read literary texts depend on notes and other secondary materials. They do not really study literature, but they study about literature and they believe that it enables them to fare well in examinations.

Students were asked to mention the techniques used by their teachers in the class. The responses to the questionnaires reveal that 20% of Indian students have teachers who solely or mainly lecture in literature classes, whereas 50% of Iraqi students have such teachers. The other teachers in both the countries use techniques like questions and answers, discussions, films and occasionally power point presentations.

The questionnaire brings out that all Indian and Iraqi students read every word in the questions carefully before answering them. All of them point out that this helps them to understand questions better and they can write more appropriate answers. Even if all the students claim this, the researcher's observation and experience indicate that this is contrary to facts. Students usually are in a hurry to answer questions and therefore, they do not seem to read questions carefully. As a result, their answers are often too general and irrelevant.

Students were asked regarding their preference for objective or descriptive questions on literature. 50% of Iraqi students and 40% of Indian students prefer to have only

descriptive questions. 20% of Indian students and 20% of Iraqi students prefer to have only objective questions. The remaining students think that for proper testing of literature, there should be a blend of descriptive and objective questions.

An attempt was made through the questionnaire to get information whether students had experienced and were aware of interpersonal variability in the assessment of their answers. Most of the Indian students and all the Iraqi students feel that they do not get the same marks for the same answers from different teachers. However, no students seem to blame the teachers for this. They think that personal opinions and points of view are responsible for these differences.

Students were asked whether they understood why they were awarded a certain number of marks for a particular answer. Half the Indian and Iraqi students do not understand this and they seem to accept this. The other students are able to understand this only sometimes. Some students point out that they usually receive marks below their expectations.

Most of the Indian students and 60% of Iraqi students consult their teachers for suggestions for improvement in their performance. The other students do not do this because the teachers often have a negative attitude towards such queries from students. Both Indian and Iraqi students suggest that teachers should encourage both bright and weak students.

This comparative study of Iraqi and Indian students' experiences reveals that there are substantial similarities between the two. Their problems and concerns are the same and it is heartening to note that they are motivated in the study of literature and that they expect

their teachers to have discussions in the class and use audio-visual aids so that they can benefit from and enjoy the study of literature.

### **5.11 Students' Perception of Teachers and Teachers' Perception of Themselves**

An interesting aspect of the questionnaire is that students were asked to point out what their teachers did in the class and teachers were asked questions relating to their classroom practices. One of the purposes of this was to find out whether students' and teachers' perceptions were similar or different. However, it needs to be pointed out here that the students' teachers were not the same as the teachers who were asked to fill in the questionnaire.

All the Iraqi and Indian teachers claim that they use lecturing as a technique of teaching, but it is always accompanied by other techniques like question-answers, discussions, presentations and the use of audio-visual aids. However, students point out that some of their teachers use only lecturing as the sole technique of teaching. This is not reflected in students' responses to the questionnaire. About half the teachers claim that they use English exclusively in their classrooms, but the students' responses indicate that fewer teachers do so and that a majority of teachers use English and students' L1. Most teachers are opposed to the use of only objective questions in the testing of literature. Interestingly, more students in both the countries prefer to have only objective questions in literature question papers, because they find it easier to deal with objective questions and they are able to score higher marks in objective tests. At the same time, it is heartening to find that some students are aware of the fact that objective questions do not really test students'

writing skills and literary competence. This section highlights the point that students and teachers are two most important participants in the teaching-learning process and their views may be considered to be complementary to each other in spite of some differences.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the main findings and conclusions of this study based on a comparison of literature question papers set in five universities each in Iraq and India.

#### **6.2 Conclusions**

1. Iraqi question papers reveal the identity of the paper setters and examiners, whereas this is never done in Indian question papers. This is due to the fact that in Iraq, the teachers, the examiners and the paper setters are the same, whereas in India in many cases, the teachers and the paper setters and the examiners are not identical. Moreover, paper setting and assessment are treated as confidential activities in India.

2. The total marks for the paper and the marks assigned to individual questions are invariably indicated in Indian question papers, whereas they are not necessarily stated in Iraqi question papers. Some Iraqi question papers indicate the expected length of the answers but not marks.

3. The total number of questions contained in Indian question papers is greater than in Iraqi question papers. Some Iraqi question papers have very few questions in them.

4. Indian question papers offer more options to students than Iraqi question papers. In some Iraqi question papers, all the questions are compulsory and there are no options at all.



5. Both Iraqi and Indian universities use essay type, short answer and objective questions in the testing of literature. A majority of questions in Iraqi universities are essay type questions, whereas a majority of questions in Indian universities are short answer questions. The number of objective questions used in both Iraqi and Indian universities is limited.

6. The expectations about the length of the answers are different in the two countries. Some Iraqi question papers instruct students to be brief and precise. In India, there has been a tradition of writing very long answers to literature questions. As a result, the answer to a short answer question in India may be longer than that to an essay type question in Iraq.

7. In both the countries, a majority of test items are imperative sentences and more command words are used than question words. In both the countries, there are various combinations of the three basic structures of questions, viz imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives.

8. A common rubric in most Indian universities is 'Write short notes on ...' This rubric is not commonly used in Iraqi universities.

9. The most frequently used command words in Iraqi universities are 'discuss' and 'comment'. The other command words used in Iraqi universities are 'identify', 'define', 'mention' and 'illustrate'. There does not seem to be any such favoured command words for Indian universities.

10. In both Iraqi and Indian universities, the most frequently used question word is 'what'. In most Iraqi and Indian universities, the second most frequent question word is 'how'.

11. In two of the Iraqi universities, the command words 'talk' and 'speak' have also been used in the written examinations. This may be due to the interference of Arabic with English.

12. Memory plays a very crucial role in answering the questions set in both Iraqi and Indian universities. Some of the answers are totally memory-dependent, whereas others are partly memory-dependent.

13. In both Iraqi and Indian universities, there are questions based on comprehension and interpretation of given literary extracts, quotations from critics and statements about literature. Such questions test the students' first-hand acquaintance with literary texts and their linguistic competence at least to some extent.

14. In both Iraqi and Indian universities, there are some questions which require students to think independently and critically. They are also expected to explain and justify their points of view.

15. In both Iraqi and Indian universities, there are very few personal response questions. Such questions enable students to relate literature to their own personal experiences of life and justify their views.

16. In both Iraqi and Indian universities, some of the literature questions tend to be too general and they often lack in focus. In such cases, students are free to write almost

anything that they know about literature and it is possible to answer such questions without the students' first-hand acquaintance with literary texts.

17. In both Iraqi and Indian universities, errors of lexis, syntax, spelling and punctuation have been observed. It is strongly felt that all question papers should always be totally error-free and that they must be in chaste and faultless English. It is expected that question papers should illustrate correct and appropriate use of the English language.

18. In some universities, there is a tendency to repeat the questions verbatim. This increases the element of predictability of questions and encourages the tendency to reproduce stock answers.

19. It is suggested that paper setters should think of more innovative questions so that the students' literary competence can be assessed more satisfactorily.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The situation relating to the teaching and testing of literature all over the world needs to be improved and made more meaningful and rewarding. Both the teaching and testing of literature need to be enjoyable processes for both students and teachers. It needs to be emphasised that literature examinations and assessment should be enjoyable events for both teachers and students. By preparing more challenging and pointed questions, paper setters can initiate the process and students can get an opportunity to display their information, knowledge, original thinking and skills of composition. More valid questions can bring out the best within every student and sharpen their literary sensibility. The recommendations made below anticipate a brighter future for both students and teachers of literature.

1. It is imperative that marks are clearly indicated in every question paper. Both the marks for each individual question and for the entire question paper need to be stated clearly and unambiguously in each question paper. It is a desirable practice to indicate the expected length of the answer. Particularly in India, there is a convention of writing very long answers to literature questions and many times the result of this is that answers are full of irrelevant details. In some unfortunate cases, marks even depend on the length of the answers. It is necessary to make students write shorter but more relevant and appropriate answers. In other words, we should be more particular about the quality of the answer rather than its quantity. The assessment criteria should pay more attention to the quality of the answer.

2. It is desirable that in literature question papers, there is a sufficient number of options in the question papers. In Indian universities, there is generally 50% option for essay type and short answer questions. This seems to be a satisfactory amount of choice. As mentioned earlier, there is no option at all in some Iraqi question papers. In order to enable the students to choose their areas of preference, it is necessary to give them options. It is a matter of debate whether objective questions on literature should have any options. Some experts believe that students must know all the relevant facts about literature and therefore, there should be no options at all. Others believe that some amount of choice, though not as much as for essay type questions, must be available to students.

3. Both Iraqi and Indian universities use a number of essay type and short answer questions to test the students' knowledge of literature. In both the situations, there should be more objective questions for testing the students' knowledge of the basic facts relating to literature. The importance of objective questions is widely recognized, as is reflected in

the National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India. In the new pattern of this test, all the questions on literature are objective questions and there is not a single essay type or short answer question on literature. However, it is felt that there must be a balance among objective questions, short answer questions and essay type questions.

4. It is necessary that paper setters use command words in questions like ‘discuss’, ‘explain’, ‘comment’ and ‘illustrate’ more discreetly. Sometimes there is a tendency to use such words indiscriminately. The command words need to be used more thoughtfully and appropriately. Command words like ‘talk’ and ‘speak’ should be avoided in written tests, because they are inappropriate to the context.

5. Even if memory plays a very important role in the study of literature, questions exclusively based on memory should be avoided as far as possible. This will check the tendency to give stock and mechanical answers. Questions also based on comprehension and interpretation of given extracts or statements are very useful from this point of view. There should be more questions encouraging students to think independently and critically and those that elicit personal responses.

6. Too general questions lacking in focus should be avoided and questions should clearly indicate what is expected in students’ answers. In other words, questions should be clearly worded and be transparent and not opaque.

7. There must not be any errors in question papers and they should be specimens of correct and appropriate English.

8. The tendency to repeat the same questions should be avoided. Any efficient teacher can easily think of better ways of asking questions which will challenge students to put in their best in the answers.

9. Workshops should be organized for teachers in order to train them in setting more valid questions. Such workshops may be held at the national level, involving a large number of universities so that there will be some uniformity among different universities. In such workshops, a number of teachers can put their heads together and they can critically analyse the questions already asked in examinations and also prepare more innovative questions. As an outcome of such a workshop, a question bank can be prepared and it can be made available to all teachers. There can be constant additions to and modifications in the question bank. The question bank may even be made available to students so that it can give a sense of direction to students in their studies.

10. An open book examination has been one of the revolutionary ideas in the field of testing. Such an examination is particularly apt for the testing of literature. It is recommended that students should be allowed to carry copies of prescribed text-books and a dictionary to the examination hall. This will drastically reduce the students' dependence on memory and their tendency to learn things by heart. Many students do not realize that they can write effective answers to questions only if they already have first-hand acquaintance with the texts. This will enable them to find suitable quotations and use them in the answers. Using the dictionary is a very important skill and students will be able to practise it in the examination hall. They can interpret literary extracts more efficiently with the help of a dictionary.

It is hoped that more valid and reliable literature tests will accurately reflect students' literary competence.

# APPENDICES



# **APPENDIX I**

## **SAMPLE QUESTION PAPERS**

**Tikrit University                      Final Examination    Subject: Short Story**

**College of Education                      2010                      Second Year**

**For Woman                                      1<sup>st</sup> model                      Time: 3 hours**

**English Department**

Note: answer question one and any other three questions.

Q1- In not more than 5-6 lines comment on (FIVE) of the following:

1. Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out!? I get so tired of looking like a boy.
2. I try not to borrow, First you borrow, then you beg.
3. "When I was alive and had a human heart, I did not know what tears were".
4. Thank God, they are not intelligent as we who kill them, although they are More noble and more able.
5. Your mother told our mother you weren't allowed to speak to us.
6. Tomorrow is going to be a good day.

Q2- Complete (5) of the following:

1. The statement that reflects the main theme of "The Old Man and the Sea"  
is.....

2. ....talks about the differences between English society classes in the Eighteenth Century.

3. Santiago removed his wife's picture because.....

4. The..... In "The Happy Prince" is a self-sacrificer.

5. The wife in "Cat in the Rain" wanted the kitty because.....

6. ....represents the hope for the Calveys.

Q3- Describe the character of the wife in "Cat in the Rain" and Vera in "The Open Window".

Q4- Do you think that Santiago was destroyed or defeated?

Q5-a- Define 5 of the following:

Short story- irony- comedy- plot- theme.

b- Talk about the symbolism in "Cat in the Rain".

Good Luck

**Dr. Medeha S. Saleh**  
**Head of Department**

**Rudaina A. Kumait**  
**Examiner**

**Salahaddin University**  
**College of Language**  
**Department of English**

**Fourth Year Novel Exam**  
**First Semester**

Q1- Illustrate the significance of the following quotation: (140 words, 5 marks, 40 minutes)

“Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon.

Art thou pale weariness

Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,

Wandering companionless?”

Q2- Identify and then discuss the significance of reference to all the five senses in the first two pages of the novel. (120 words, 5 marks, 30 minutes)

Q3- Whenever frustrated or in pain, Stephen Dedalus recreates the world in an imaginary artistic vision. Mention and briefly explain two situations from the text that can support this statement. (160 words, 5 marks, 35 minutes)

**Examiner**

**Kawan Othman Arif**

**Lecturer**

**SARDAR PATEL UNIVERSITY**

**S.Y.B.A. EXAMINATION**

**2008**

**Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> March**

**11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.**

**ENGLISH LITERATURE (MODERN AGE)**

**(PAPER-V)**

**Total Marks: 70**

Q1- Write a detailed note on the thematic concerns of the poem “The Waste  
“Land”

**OR**

Q1- Write short notes on the following

- i. Imagery in “The Burial of the Dead”
- ii. The end of “The Burial of the Dead”

Q2- Write a detailed note on the significance of the title The Rainbow

**OR**

Q2- Write short notes on the following

- i. The Marsh farm
- ii. Ursula as a school teacher

Q3- Write a critical note on the plot construction of the play The Importance of Being Earnest

**OR**

Q3- Write short notes on the following:

- i. The beginning of the play.
- ii. Hon. Govendolen

Q4- Consider The Rainbow as a psychological novel.

**OR**

Q4- Write short notes on the following:

- i. Tom's relation with Anna
- ii. The title "The Waste Land"

Q5- Consider The Importance of Being Earnest as a comedy.

**OR**

Q5- Write short notes on the following

- i. Lady Bracknell
- ii. Biblical references in "What the Thunder Said"

Q6- Answer **any two** of the following:

- i. Miss Prism
- ii. Will's married life.
- iii. The end of "The Waste Land"
- iv. Eliot's use of "Point of View" in "The Waste Land"

**BHARATI UNIVERSITY**

**MULA-I- (2003 course) Oct/Nov-2007**

**SUBJECT: OPTIONAL ENGLISH (G-1)**

**(MINOR FROM OF LITERATURE)**

Day : Monday

Time: 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

Date: 08-10-2007

Max. Marks: 80

**N.B.:**

- 1) All questions are **COMPULSORY**.
- 2) Figures to the right indicate **FULL** Marks.
- 3) Both the Section should be written in one and the **SAME** answer book.

**SECTION-I**

Q.1 Attempt an appreciation of any **ONE** of the following stories: **(16)**

- a) The Earth
- b) The Rocking
- c) The Bet
- d) A Cup of Tea

Q2. Write short-note on any **TWO** of the following: **(16)**

- a) Setting of the Short-story
- b) Brevity in the Short-story
- c) One-act play as a form of literature
- d) Characterisation in One-act play

## **SECTION-II**

Q3. Write an appreciation of any **ONE** of the following poems: **(16)**

- a) On His Blindness
- b) The Ballad of Father Gilligan
- c) Unharvested
- d) Anthem for the Doomed Youth

Q4. Write short-note on any **TWO** of the following: **(16)**

The treatment of human being to each other according to William Wordsworth

- a) The symbol of unchanging nature in Keat's 'Sonnet 20'
- b) Aunt Helen
- c) Racial discrimination in 'Telephone Conversation'

Q5. Write short-note on any **TWO** of the following: **(16)**

- a) Types of an Elegy
- b) The Elizabethan lyric
- c) Kinds of an Essay
- d) Characteristics of Essay



## APPENDIX II

### THE QUESTIONNAIRES

#### THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Name:

Class:

College/ Institute:

Medium of Instruction:

- 1- How long have you been studying English literature?
- 2- Do you love studying literature? Why? Why not?
- 3- Do your teachers teach English literature through English or your mother tongue?  
Do you like it? Why? Why not?
- 4- Do your teachers lecture throughout the class or do they have discussions, presentations, questions and answers, use of CD or films etc? Do you enjoy their teaching of literature? Why?
- 5- Do you always read the prescribed texts for literature? Why? Why not? If do you not read texts, how do you prepared for an examination?
- 6- Do you always read every word in the question carefully before answering it? Why? Why not?
- 7- Do you prefer to have objective questions or descriptive questions on literature? Why?

- 8- Do you think that different teachers would give you different marks for the same answer? Why?
- 9- When you get your examination result, do you understand why you have got a certain number of marks?
- 10- Do you ask teachers what you should do to improve your performance in literature?  
If yes, what response do you get from them?
- 11- Would you like to suggest any thing to improve the teaching of literature in the class and examinations on literature?

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Name:

College / Institute:

Educational Qualifications:

Experience:

Area of Specialization:

- 1- How long have been teaching literature to undergraduate students?
- 2- Do you love teaching literature? Why? Why not?
- 3- Do you use English or student's first language during lecture?
- 4- Do you use technique of lecturing throughout your class or any other techniques? If you use any other technique like asking questions, use of audio-visual aids, presentations and discussions. Please specify them.
- 5- Did you attend any workshop, seminar, orientation course, training programme etc in testing? If yes what did you gain from it?
- 6- What types of questions do you use for testing the students' knowledge of literature-objective questions, short answer questions or essay type questions? Why?
- 7- When you prepare questions for an examination, do you show them to your colleague before finalizing them? Why/ Why not?
- 8- When you award marks or grades to a literature answer, which criteria do you use for deciding this?

- 9- Are you satisfied with the questions set on literature and the current practice of assessing them? Why/ Why not?
- 10- If there are only objective questions in literature question papers, do you think this can test students' literary competence?
- 11- What changes would you like to suggest for improving questions on literature and assessment of answers.

## **APPENDIX III**

### **SAMPLE ANALYSIS OF QUESTION PAPERS OF TWO**

#### **UNIVERSITIES**

##### **Basrah University**

**Number of Questions** 122

**Types of Questions**

Short Answer Questions 22

Essay Type Questions 96

Objective Questions 04

**Structure of Questions**

Imperative 56

Interrogative 09

Declarative + Imperative 18

Declarative 04

Interrogative + Interrogative + Interrogative 01

Imperative +Declarative 07

Interrogative + Interrogative 10

|                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Declarative + Imperative + Imperative + Interrogative | 01 |
| Declarative + Interrogative + Imperative              | 01 |
| Declarative + Imperative                              | 07 |
| Declarative                                           | 13 |
| Declarative + Interrogative                           | 02 |
| <b><u>Key words</u></b>                               |    |
| What                                                  | 26 |
| Discuss                                               | 29 |
| Define                                                | 11 |
| Explain                                               | 09 |
| Comment                                               | 08 |
| How                                                   | 06 |
| Compare                                               | 04 |
| Elaborate                                             | 04 |
| Justify                                               | 03 |
| Write a detailed note                                 | 03 |
| Examine                                               | 02 |

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Major theme         | 02 |
| Give examples       | 02 |
| Agree or disagree   | 02 |
| To what             | 02 |
| Specify             | 02 |
| Trace               | 01 |
| Briefly account for | 01 |
| Underline           | 01 |
| Complete            | 01 |
| Mark out            | 01 |

**What is Being Tested?**

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Memory            | 122 |
| Thinking          | 52  |
| Comprehension     | 40  |
| Personal Response | 11  |

## **Pune University**

**Number of Questions** 307

### **Types of Questions**

Short answer questions 175

Essay type questions 58

Objective questions 31

Short + Objective questions 43

### **Structure of Questions**

Imperative 157

Interrogative 92

Interrogative + Interrogative 25

Imperative + Interrogative 01

Imperative + Imperative 06

Declarative + Imperative 06

Interrogative + Imperative 19

Imperative + interrogative + Imperative 01



## **Key words**

|                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| What               | 62 |
| How                | 31 |
| Explain            | 28 |
| Comment            | 22 |
| Why                | 28 |
| Discuss            | 28 |
| Write a note       | 14 |
| Describe           | 07 |
| Define             | 09 |
| Give example       | 10 |
| Bring out          | 06 |
| Draw character     | 04 |
| Identify           | 10 |
| Detailed character | 04 |
| Consider           | 07 |
| Who                | 13 |

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Where                               | 05  |
| Write detailed note                 | 03  |
| Compared and contrast               | 02  |
| Examine                             | 02  |
| State                               | 02  |
| Give names                          | 04  |
| Show                                | 03  |
| Critically analyse                  | 05  |
| Write an appreciation               | 03  |
| How many                            | 01  |
| What major                          | 01  |
| What kind                           | 01  |
| <b><u>What is being Tested?</u></b> |     |
| Memory                              | 307 |
| Thinking                            | 64  |
| Close study                         | 59  |
| Personal response                   | 07  |

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Comprehension | 11 |
| Application   | 06 |

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